



Ex Libris
JOHN AND MARTHA DANIELS



HUNTING AND STALKING
THE DEER



SOME FAMOUS STAG-HUNTERS

From a Drawing by Lionel Edwards

HUNTING & STALKING THE DEER THE PURSUIT OF RED, FALLOW AND ROE DEER IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

BY

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AND

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OF CENTRAL AND WESTERN CHINA," "BRITISH
DEER HEADS," ETC.

WITH EIGHT COLOURED PLATES AND NUMEROUS
PLATES IN BLACK-AND-WHITE FROM DRAWINGS BY
THE AUTHORS

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PREFATORY NOTES

I. STAG-HUNTING

THE hunting centres of England have changed many times. In olden days, possibly the New Forest, Sherwood, Rockingham, and Windsor may have been the centres. But long since the fox has taken precedence of the Royal Hart, and now Melton is the heart of Sporting England.

Yet it may be as well to remind fellow fox-hunters that Melton was not always the centre of the fox-hunting world. Charlton, in the parish of Singleton (near Goodwood), was once the Melton Mowbray of its day, and the ill-fated Monmouth is recorded as saying, "When he was King he would come and keep his Court at Charlton." But the Charlton Hunt is long since defunct and its glory departed.

A like fate has overtaken stag-hunting. From being the sport of our ancestors, it has, save in one or two places, become only a memory. But where it still exists at all it flourishes, and although it would be invidious, perhaps, to say that any one place represents the Melton of stag-hunting, yet Exmoor is the equivalent of "The Shires" to a stag-hunter.

For me "the Forest" and the deer possess a charm which has never faded, and so I offer these notes in pen and pencil on stag-hunting without apology for their incompleteness, believing they may interest those who know the West Country. I hope also they may interest fox-hunters, since I endeavour, however inadequately, to show how their sport arose from the ashes of a more ancient chase.

LIONEL EDWARDS.

BUCKHOLT, 1927.

II. DEER-STALKING

DURING the past thirty years various books on deer-stalking have appeared. With but few exceptions they are purely descriptive and contain no detailed examination of the heads of Scottish red deer, nor of the methods by which they may be improved. That they are capable of improvement is shown by the fact that every year the best heads, with but few exceptions, come from those forests which are in the hands of their owners, or are let on long leases. This can be seen by a perusal of the lists of heads in Chapter XXIV. The measurements of "The Muckle Hart of Benmore," the most famous red stag recorded in the annals of British sport, killed by Charles St. John in 1833, have never before been published and should prove of great interest to all stalkers.

To the roe I have paid particular attention. Though much is written in connection with red deer, scarcely a line appears about this supremely interesting little animal. Only one volume devoted to their pursuit—and this entirely in connection with hunting as distinct from stalking—has been published since my old friend Mr. Millais' *British Deer and their Horns*, which must always remain the standard work for the deer-stalker.

I have endeavoured to avoid, as far as possible, going over ground already covered by him. The sketches of roe heads, typifying as they do various forms from the collection of H.R.H. the late Duke of Orleans, are of especial value.

Much of the material contained in the following chapters has appeared in the form of articles in the *Field*, *Country Life*, the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, and the *Badminton Magazine*. Where necessary they have been re-written and brought up to date. To the Editors of these papers I am indebted for permission to make use of them here.

Particularly am I grateful to Professor Julian Huxley, Professor of Zoology at the University of London, who has classified and arranged the results of our joint labours at Warnham Court and allowed me to include them. Without the co-operation of Captain C. E. Lucas this would have been impossible, and my best thanks are due also to him.

The happiest days of my life have been spent among the hills and glens of Scotland "chasing the red deer and following the roe." If I have succeeded in conveying to my readers a small part of the intense joy I have experienced myself, I shall feel that my life has not been entirely wasted.

FRANK WALLACE.

OLD CORRIEMONY,
GLEN URQUHART, 1927.

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STAG-HUNTING



AN UNGALLANT HUSBAND!

CHAPTER I

OLD TIME HUNTING

I. EARLY DAYS

ALTHOUGH "the sport of our ancestors" has lately come to mean fox-hunting, it is none the less a fact that *the* sport of *their* ancestors was stag-hunting. The Chase is of such antiquity that it would involve the writing of a mighty tome to follow its history with any accuracy. Hunting "at force"—that is, with horse and hound, as against the mere procuring of venison by unsportsmanlike methods, which a mediæval writer describes as "forestalling him with nets and engines"—is generally believed to have been brought into this country by the Normans. But methods of destroying the quarry, or at any rate limiting its chance of escape, lingered on to even Stuart times, for James I, writing to his son Henry Prince of Wales, says, "I cannot here omit the hunting, namely, with running hounds which is the honourable and noblest sort thereof, for it is but a thievish form of hunting to shoot with Guns and Bows!" Again, in Henry VIII's period we find enclosures into which beasts of the chase were driven, still in use, for were not certain monks returning from Cheshunt Nunnery driven in the dark into such a "buckstall" by one Sir Henry Colt? The

latter presented the captives to King Henry, whose remark was that "he had often seen sweeter, but never fatter venison"! (*Vide Fuller's Church History of Britain.*)

The expulsion of the inhabitants of Hampshire to make a royal game preserve by William the Conqueror has made that monarch unpopular with modern historians. In actual fact, *Domesday Book* shows us that vast forests covered this country, and we may judge from the fact the total population of Britain was said to be only 1,504,925 that the number of inhabitants of Hampshire incommoded by this act cannot have been great! However, under Henry II, Richard I, and John the Royal Forests were greatly increased, and it cannot be denied that "By these New Afforestations . . . the greater part of the Realme was become Forest . . . to the great grief and sorrow of the inhabitants of this land."

The severity of the Game Laws was such that trespassing against the King's venison was punished by mutilation and loss of sight, and these severe laws continued until Edward I repealed the sanguinary code and replaced it with pecuniary fines.

The campaigns of the Wars of the Roses were the first event to seriously reduce the number of deer, hitherto so sedulously preserved. The great nobles who took part in these wars were seriously embarrassed financially as the result, and had to commute personal service for money (rents) to meet the expenses incurred in the conflict. "Thus not only were bondsmen emancipated but given an interest in the soil . . . and they applied themselves with earnestness to cultivation for the first time."

This may be said to be the beginning of modern conditions, and although agriculture passed through various adverse phases, still on the whole it continued to improve, and by Queen Elizabeth's time much of the land previously devoted to the pasturage of deer was under plough. During Elizabeth's reign, in Kent alone fifty-three parks possessing the rights of free warren were disparked. By Charles I's time deer were scarce, for, in addition to better farming, less severe game laws, and more poaching, there was the deadly scourge of murrain, particularly virulent at that period. Then came the Civil War, which was the final blow to the deer. Even the Royal Forests at Windsor were heavily poached, and at the cessation of hostilities it was said that "nothing was left in the country save Roundheads and Rabbits." At the Restoration an effort was made to revive stag-hunting by replenishing the Royal Forests. Deer were brought from Germany—witness disbursements "£176 8. 8. for a parcel of deer sent by the Duke of Brandenburg"; a close time for deer was introduced and desperate efforts made to revive a moribund sport. But early stag-hunting may be said to have ended with the Civil War.

II. THE DECLINE OF STAG-HUNTING

This period marks the beginning of sport as we understand it. The exclusiveness of feudal sport is dead and "a social instead of a selfish sport has taken its place." Stag-hunting, as will be seen, developed on two different lines, of which more anon.

The Dukes of Beaufort, Bedford, and Marlborough carried on stag-hunting, but it is difficult to say with certainty if they hunted wild or semi-wild park deer. I strongly suspect that, although not "enlarged" for the occasion, the deer hunted were "outliers" (and permitted trespassers at that)—that is, deer who had escaped from the home parks of these great noblemen. From the period of Charles II to Anne there is singularly little stag-hunting history. We know, however, that the Duke of Bedford was hunting wild deer late in the seventeenth century in Holt Chase, and on Dartmoor and in the covers that flank the rivers Tamar, Tavy, Teign, and Dart; and that deer went to sea in Torbay, as they do now in the Bristol Channel.

In 1762 the 5th Duke of Beaufort, at the conclusion of an unsatisfactory hunt after a stag, threw his hounds into Silkwood and had a wonderful hunt after a fox. This is said to have been the beginning of fox-hunting at Badminton. The kennel books of the staghounds, 1728 to 1762, are still in existence, and there is also a picture by Wootton, dated *circa* 1730, showing a stag-hunt at Badminton. Incidentally it may be remarked that at a much later date the Badminton hounds had not altogether forgotten their former quarry, for in 1803 Philip Payne, on his arrival from Cheshire, notices that the hounds are being exercised in the deer park *in couples*.

To return to Dartmoor, I am unable to discover when stag-hunting ceased. A few red deer lingered until thirty years ago. Dr. Foster, one of the oldest members of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds, remembers that pack going to Dartmoor for a few days' hunting, but also recalls they did not find. Mr. W. M. G. Singer tells me he has seen red deer on the outskirts of Dartmoor when cubbing with the South Devon about 1901, and believes the Quantock Staghounds killed a deer (by invitation) in that country about the same time.

Between the Restoration and Queen Anne I have not managed to find much stag-hunting history, as I remarked before. But William of Orange was a keen sportsman. Details are somewhat lacking, as historical writers almost entirely confine their attentions to the military and political side of the reign of "this glorious, pious and immortal sovereign." William is supposed to have met his death in the hunting field, but contemporary evidence is somewhat at variance as to the actual circumstances. Under Anne (1702-1714) the Royal Buckhounds flourished, and she regularly hunted until gout precluded her from horse exercise. Nothing daunted, she continued to hunt on wheels! She drove a calash, a light two-wheel carriage, with a

black horse in the shafts, and followed the runs "in the Forest Glades of Merry Windsor, sometimes covering 40 miles in a day."

During this period hunting was extraordinarily popular with all classes, and the Queen's example had doubtless much to do with this, "for Queen Anne delighted to see these common people hunt, and be merry" (J. P. Hore, *History of the King's Buckhounds*).

The inaugurator of Ascot Races, this Diana Venatrix was popular with all classes. No wonder in less glorious days we think of good times in the past as being "dead as Queen Anne"!

Perhaps, however, the outstanding feature (so far as hunting is concerned) in Anne's reign is a bet made by Squire Legh of Lyme Park, Cheshire, that his huntsman (Joseph Watson) could drive a herd of twenty-four deer from there to Windsor. The astounding bet was won. According to Searth Dixon's *Hunting in the Olden Days*, it was said of Watson that "he hath driven and commanded them at his pleasure as if they had been horned cattle."

George I preferred not only his native country but the hunting therein also. Nevertheless, he did quite a lot of hunting in Windsor Forest "and killed a brace of bucks and afterwards dined at Cranborn Lodge." To again quote from Lord Ribblesdale: "An instance of the German complexion which pervaded everything at Windsor occurs in a picture at Windsor of George I out hunting in the great Park with his suite. The names of fourteen or fifteen personages are all given on the tablet. With two exceptions they are all German. Even one of the exceptions is Germanised, the huntsman being handed down to posterity as Ned Finsch."

Under George II the Royal Buckhounds flourished exceedingly, and ladies are much in evidence at this period. Blue habits faced and turned up with red, white beaver hats and black feathers, were the regulation hunting kit for the ladies of the Court, and very smart it must have looked.

The fair Dianas were most enthusiastic—witness Lady Mar. "I have got a horse," she writes, "superior to any two-legged animal, he being without fault."

The Court at this period seems to have been very keen. At any rate, its members were "always coming to grief and having to be bled!"

A new danger was added to hunting at this time by the number of highwaymen who infested the neighbourhood of London. Mr. Mellish, M.S.H. of the Epping Forest Hunt, was murdered one evening on his return from hunting. Again, Lord Tankerville, Master of the Buckhounds in 1733, sets out to make arrangements for the hunting season with a guard of retainers and troops. In 1735 such great crowds came out with the King's hounds that sportsmen could only hunt by ticket, which had to be signed by the Ranger of Windsor or his deputy (*Stag-hunting Recollections*, by Lord Ribblesdale).

Up to 1737, on the evidence of Wootton's picture of a stag at bay in a pond in Windsor Park, it would seem deer were still killed (the gun in the dismounted sportsman's hand is significant).

But under George III the deer were carted and saved, and apparently showed extraordinarily good sport, especially the deer "Moonshine" and "Starlight," so called from the frequency with which they ran their pursuers out of daylight. The story of George III driving home to the Castle in a butcher's cart after a great run beyond Reading is too well known to enlarge on again.

With George IV a new and more rapid era dawns, for foxhounds were then first utilised to hunt the deer. I think it would be safe to state that the arrival of the Goodwood Hounds at Windsor and the sale of the old North Devon Staghounds in the West mark the end of old time stag-hunting.

CHAPTER II

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

THAT not inconsiderable portion of the public whose primitive instincts contain an ineradicable sporting tendency are at times confronted with antagonists who do not see eye to eye with them on the question of field sports. And there are among these opponents, cranks entirely apart, some lovers of animals whose arguments are difficult to refute. Most sportsmen have come across such opponents, some of them by no means unworthy foemen. It has always seemed curious to me how seldom either side has taken into consideration the fact that, but for their sporting value most, if not all, of our larger birds and mammals would long since have become extinct like the wolf, and however fond you may be of animals, you cannot enthuse over an extinct species!

There is, for example, that most beautiful of all British mammals, the red deer. Originally pursued for the pot by fair means and foul (chiefly the latter!) by our primitive ancestors, it became from Norman times down to the Civil War the principal beast of veneration, hunted with much state and ceremony, and most strictly preserved.

But the break-up of estates and general lawlessness during that civil commotion, which lasted until the Restoration, led to the almost complete extinction of the deer. It is true a few herds managed to survive, in spite of the countless Enclosure Acts and the spread of agriculture, but the few survivors were those in the uninhabited expanses of Exmoor and Dartmoor, the New Forest and the Scottish Highlands. In at least one of even these districts the deer are now extinct, and the sole reason why they still exist anywhere is that they have a definite market value in the pleasure they give to those who hunt or shoot them. This brings profit to the tradesmen who supply the sportsman, and there is a distribution of wealth in country districts through the inhabiting of the larger houses, hotels, etc., and the employment thereby created. Such wealth would otherwise be spent only in the towns and, owing to our dreadful winter climate, a great deal of it abroad.

Only those who live in proximity to deer have any idea what troublesome neighbours they can be. Deer love to steal from the rich cultivated land.

They run no inconsiderable risks in so doing, but, doubtless, to cervice as to human nature :

"To the honey of the undetected, is added
The nectar of the unpermitted."

They enter the fields at night, taking toll of all crops in their season and doing especially great damage to root crops. From my bedroom window I have seen them even steal potatoes from the garden close to the farmstead.

Some idea of the damage done in one year may be gathered from the following figures, which are pre-War :—

	£	s.	d.
Compensation for deer damage	713	18	5
Deer netting	129	17	4

These figures are much higher now, I believe ; but the erection of deer netting round some of the most exposed moorland farms has undoubtedly somewhat counterbalanced the claims made in recent years. It must be remembered that the stringent laws in relation to deer-poaching are no more. Yet that all classes realise his money value as an asset to the neighbourhood he inhabits is proved by the fact that his removal by illicit means is rare, and I am inclined to think that, although an occasional wire is set, and in it one may sometimes find a dark form hanging by head or heels, deer are destroyed surreptitiously, as a rule, only when some exasperated farmer has been unduly robbed on succeeding nights and has been tempted to lie in wait with a shotgun to "scald the beggars," i.e. pepper them with small shot to drive them away, rather than with deliberate intent to murder. As Byron tells us, "The devil's in the moon for mischief."

To show how times change it may not be without interest to compare the recent past and the present. White's *Natural History of Selborne* says, "Although large herds of deer do much harm to the neighbourhood, yet the injury to the morals of the people is of more moment than the loss of crops !" The severe and sanguinary Act called the Black Act (Statute 9, George I, cap. 22) was framed to suppress a body of deer-stealers (the Waltham Blacks), who committed these and such other enormities that the Government were obliged to interfere. At the present time, with the removal of practically all the severe safeguarding penalties, there is far less deer-poaching ; indeed, practically none. Yet successive Governments make futile enactments dealing with, say, the suppression of gambling, or the encouragement of thrift, in the apparent belief that we can be made perfect by Acts of Parliament !

The truth really is, I think, that better education, higher wages, and, above all, an increase of football and other village amusements have done more to protect game than any game laws, though I am quite prepared to acknowledge that most sportsmen will not agree with this view. So long as

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Hunts can manage to pay for the bulk of damage done by deer or foxes, or so long as, in Scotland, rich tenants can be found to inhabit the great houses in the North, bringing wealth into sparsely populated districts, that beautiful and "most stateliest beast," the red deer, will remain to delight the eye of the animal lover. And whether he is "set up" by the baying pack or falls to smokeless powder, let us not grieve. In either case, is he not paying the price of Freedom?

What applies to the deer applies also to the fox—the beast owes his existence to the chase, and as Mr. William Collier said, "Which of us would not gladly compound with destiny for a bad quarter of an hour at the end?"

CHAPTER III

THE MOST STATELIEST BEAST

"He (the red deer) is accounted of divers writers to be the most stateliest beast in his gait that doth go upon the earth, for he doth carry majesty in his countenance."

Isidorus, Book XII.

THE great influence which the red deer has unconsciously wielded over his human contemporaries has not been always for the good of the latter. But few who have ever had anything to do with deer can deny its existence! From the days when, according to tradition, William the Conqueror laid waste Hampshire for the greater preservation of the cervine race, down to comparatively recent times on the Continent, the deer have been fenced round with laws and penalties.¹ "And, because of his noble bearing, and of the pleasure which kings and princes and knights and ladies had in his pursuit, it was ordained no ignoble hand should presume to wage war against him" (*Forest Creatures*, by Charles Bonner, 1861). Especially on the Continent, but here also in feudal days, the most inhuman statutes defended the red deer: "whoever should slay stag, hart or hind, him man shall blind." And so it came to pass that human life was held cheaper than that of a deer. The Church was even less merciful to the deer-poacher than the laity—for did not the Archbishop Michael of Salzburg in 1537 sew up a peasant in a stag's skin for his hounds to worry because the said peasant had stolen venison?

But no severity of law ever stopped deer-poaching! The same passion for the chase which consumed My Lord was felt as strongly by the peasant! And although no longer does any severe statute preserve the deer, something of their influence on human nature still prevails. In countries where they survive and are hunted the deer are loved—admittedly it is a cupboard love in the West Country, for stag-hunting has brought wealth to such towns as Minehead, Lynton, etc., which would scarcely exist save for stag-hunting. Possibly the tripper element which throngs the roads in these days of motor-charabancs would now bring wealth into these distant parts, admittedly very

¹ "Of William the Conqueror it was said that he loved the tall deer as if he were their father. The deer of Exmoor have hundreds of such fathers, for they are loved by every one." Richard Jefferies, *Red Deer*.

beautiful, but at least equalled elsewhere, but that prosperity has been so long the lot of these places is entirely due to the stag-hunting.

As an example of the prosperity of the country, local sportsmen were obliged to pay for local hay as much as £10 per ton when it was being bought in Warwickshire and the pick of the hunting counties at under £6 per ton during a year when hay was admittedly expensive everywhere.

That the inhabitants display a very real love for the deer I have seen on many occasions. Once on an autumn evening an up-country lady was hacking home down a combe and the sullen roar of a lovesick stag broke the stillness. As she rode along she copied his vocal efforts. Rounding a corner she met an old man, who apparently had been listening to both parties, for he said as she passed, in sorrowful indignation, "Never mock 'un, Lady! Never mock 'un!"

Again, a fine stag was run up in Hackety-Way by one couple of hounds. The workmen engaged on a new house "took" the stag and sent him down to the village in a cart. Unfortunately just as he reached the village he slipped his bonds and was promptly hunted down the street by the two hounds who were following the cart. Bewildered by the traffic, the stag darted into some stables, and a groom at work in them deftly slid the door of the loose box to. His arrival in the haunts of men caused some little stir. The kindly village constable, after sending a 'phone message to the Master for instructions, mounted guard over the captive to save him being frightened by curious crowds of noisy holiday-makers. The Master of the period, harassed by farmers' claims for damage by deer, ordered his despatch by the local butcher; but there was great indignation expressed in the "pub" that night, not at the destruction of the animal but the manner of it—that a fine local stag should come to his end by such ignoble means. Yet these same people would have "done their damndest" to help the Hunt to "take him" during a hunt!

As an example of the enthusiasm aroused by the chase of the red deer let me quote Philip Evered's *Stag-hunting on Exmoor*, page 55: "Certain favourite places there are where a view of the hunted deer can be obtained. . . . These view-places generally have their complement of foot people . . . and in many parts of the country in each successive season the same fields and trees have the same occupants."

Another example is that the most highly prized trophy in local horse shows is a stag's head presented by the Master of Staghounds.

It is a long time ago now, but there was a time when the meets of the staghounds for the following week were given out in church by the local parson!

Unconsciously we are influenced by "the majesty of his countenance," for men have always treated the stag as a monarch. Consider, for example,

the stag in terms of Heraldry or of Venerie. His very movements are never spoken of as those of some ignoble beast. When at rest he is "couched"; if he goes forth to meet a foe, it is not to fight but "to combat." Nor is there a want of picturesqueness in such terms: when foam is round his mouth he is said to be "embossed." All this, tending to remove the stag from mere brute, to raise him and give him certain human attributes, is evidence of the supreme delight that was felt in his presence, and his pursuit. Thus Bonner in *Forest Creatures*, also *vide* two passages from Turberville: "When you speak of a hart's horns you must term them the head, not the horns of a hart." Again, "when he stayeth to look at anything, then he standeth at gaze."

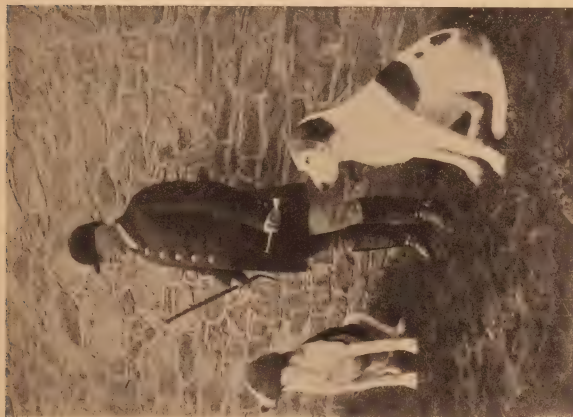
Certainly it is a strange influence which the stag possesses, and apparently one that is exercised by no other animal. It would, I suppose, be somewhat tersely described by Brither Scot as "staag fever!"

CHAPTER IV

SOME FAMOUS STAG-HUNTERS

IT is a curious fact that, although stag-hunting is by far the oldest sport in the British Isles, it has never (at any rate, in recent times) captured the imagination of the general public to the same extent as fox-hunting. Be the reason what it may, the fact is easily proved by asking almost any sportsman to name a famous stag-hunter. Although the names of Tom Firr, Goodall, Will Dale, and many another huntsman of foxhounds will come readily to his lips, the chances are he will not easily name a stag-hunter—though if he be of the older generation the name of Charles Davis, huntsman to the Royal Buckhounds, will immediately occur to him. Charles Davis was portrayed many times (his brother was an artist), but he was principally immortalised by Sir Francis Grant, and his memory is still kept green by the many well-known engravings of this picture. Although he only hunted the carted deer, which is not a great science, yet it requires the very best and boldest of horsemen to gallop and jump big fences at stag-hunting pace.

Those who have hunted the carted deer know well the vagaries of these animals. Fed and exercised like hunt horses (and after the first occasion by no means afraid of the hounds that pursue them), it does not by any means follow they will run at all! I well remember a stag turned out with Lord Rothschild's that, after being enlarged, galloped for a couple of fields and then settled down comfortably to feed. Being chased, with much whip-cracking, it did a circle back to the deer van! It was evidently this deer's off day, and so a second was enlarged and incidentally gave a topping hunt across "The Vale." Carted deer get very cunning; knowing full well that a road carries little scent, they are very apt to run them, and also on railway lines. I think they do this with an idea of the line of least resistance (no pun intended), as they save themselves the trouble of jumping fences. Apparently, also, anything in the nature of an open door reminds them of the deer van, as in they invariably pop. Mr. Jorrocks' tale of "Old Tunbridge," the deer who jumped into a post-chaise and was carried off from the Bell at Sevenoaks, is probably not really so far-fetched. These comic and trying situations must have fallen to the lot of even "The Queen's" (Royal Buckhounds), and Charles Davis must have been a very wonder if (as is



Linkboy.

Druid.
ARTHUR HEAL



Telegram.

Romulus.
ANTHONY HUXTABLE



CHARLES DAVIS
Huntsman to the Royal Buckhounds.

stated) he never lost his head or his dignity. In fact, there is a story still extant of his lying in a muddy ditch clasping the neck of a deer called "The Richmond Trump" and, with a perfectly solemn face, remarking they had done twenty miles in sixty-five minutes, or words to that effect!

Davis began very young and, it is said, started life as second whip to his father, who was huntsman to the King's Harriers (George III's). He became first whip in 1817 to the King's Foxhounds and, later, huntsman to the Royal Buckhounds (1822). Davis died in 1867, aged seventy-nine, but his straightness in private life, his perfect manners, his good looks, and brilliant horsemanship have made his memory long outlive the pack he hunted (now defunct). The country he rode over, or, at any rate, much of it, is now part of Greater London.

The curious thing about stag-hunting (excepting, of course, the carted animal, where bold horsemanship is perhaps the most requisite essential) is that hunt servants are difficult to obtain. If a pack of staghounds hunting the wild animal falls short of huntsman or whip, the place of the latter is far less easily filled than in the case of fox-hunting. A whip to staghounds can fill the huntsman's place in an emergency, but a whip promoted from foxhounds is practically useless. This can be easily enough explained. Knowledge of deer and their ways is usually purely local. A man not used to the pursuit of deer is no help—a whip must be able to get to likely "points"; he must be able to tell at a fleeting glance whether hounds are hunting the same deer they started with. This requires a knowledge and memory of deers' antlers, not easily acquired. If one cannot quickly spot how many "on top" he carries, or any peculiarity of horn-growth, one cannot be sure of one's deer. If this is so with a whip, how much more so must it be with a huntsman. I have heard it said that anyone ought to be able to hunt deer. They have a peculiarly ravishing scent which lies a long time, and being big animals, they are easy to see; consequently, holloas are of frequent occurrence—and of great assistance—and they *cannot go to ground!* Quite so—but if you lose a fox, you can always *say* he's gone to ground, and no one but your hounds can give you the lie direct! A deer may not be quite as cunning as a fox, but, personally, I think he is, and that often it is only his large size that defeats his careful strategy. His use of streams and rivers to elude hounds is only just surpassed by that of the otter, and he is more adept at transferring the burden of the chase to another than either the fox or the hare.

A huntsman to staghounds hunting the wild animal leads a hard life. Although he has not to endure the great nervous strain of riding fast and frequently over big fences, nor perhaps has so many crashing falls, which are the necessary accompaniment of really riding to hounds in the Shires, still he has very long days in the saddle. A run may be of great length; over

twenty miles is far from unknown, and this means immense distances home. The Devon and Somerset hunt practically all the year round (end of July to October and November to end of April), a long season compared with fox-hunting. Since the Devon and Somerset started breeding their own hounds the life of the huntsman must be even more strenuous; indeed, I have heard it described as nine months' hard work and three months' hard labour!

A West Country huntsman is exposed to the great heat of August days as well as wintry weather, the former being even more trying than the latter. In addition to this, he runs some risk in taking his deer, though in modern times serious accidents are unknown, which is the more curious as in the past, apparently, it was otherwise. The old saying is: "After the boar the leech, but after the hart the bier!" At bay, the stags use not only antlers, but forelegs, and they can also kick with great force and rapidity, so they are no easy animals to tackle even when "properly runned up," as they say. There are plenty of instances of stags charging (see the chapter on the "Stag at Bay"). Only last season a fallow buck charged the huntsman of the New Forest and got home—fortunately only on his saddle flap! Some years ago a Devon stag "treed" the huntsman just as he was about to kill him. All the same, a bold man can do wonders, and a sporting farmer, locally known as "Clattering Jack," I believe, a year or two ago took a stag single-handed! Which feat has been emulated since, I believe, more than once.

The Devon and Somerset have had many notable hunt servants, not the least so being Joe Faulkner. In spite of his being continually discharged for an over-fondness for lifting his elbow (according to Dr. Collyn's famous book on *The Chase of the Wild Red Deer*), yet his sins were always forgiven, willy nilly, as his place could not be filled.

As a schoolboy I remember the famous old huntsman Arthur Heal, a very old man then, but still a mounted spectator of the sport in which he had distinguished himself. He was followed by Anthony Huxtable, another brilliant huntsman, who showed extraordinarily good sport, in spite of being far from a strong man. Indeed, I believe I am correct in saying that he died of consumption very shortly after he retired, at the age of fifty. He carried the horn for twelve years, was nine years previously first whip to Heal, and four years before that in the hunt stables. Besides his hunting experience he was one of the few men who have successfully pursued many trades, directly controverting the old adage that "rolling stones gather no moss." Thus Mr. Phillip Evered, the author of *Stag-hunting on Exmoor*, speaks of him.

Huxtable was in turn followed by his first whip, Sidney Tucker, and I believe I am right in saying that the latter was the first and only huntsman to distinguish himself as a stag-hunter on Exmoor who was not locally (West Country) born and bred. Tucker was a Londoner, I believe. He has retired now, but many hunting visitors will long remember the sport he showed.

I can see him now, galloping down a steep hillside, with clouds of shale and small stones land-sliding before him. What a wonder that little black cock-tailed pony of his was, to be sure! I have seen far worse country galloped over with Welsh foxhound packs and on the neighbouring Dartmoor, but I have never seen anyone else "travel" over bad country like Tucker. There are some nasty places on Exmoor, notably on the cliff paths that border the Bristol Channel. On one of these Tucker had a very narrow escape. A one-horned stag, nearly beat and closely pursued by hounds, doubled back on his tracks and met the huntsman galloping down the narrow path: a sheer drop beneath (it is over 300 feet in places) and a steep bank above. Cramming his horse against the inner side as the deer rushed past, he evaded the charge. Fortunately, the one horn was on the outside, otherwise horse and man would have been hurled over to certain destruction. The present huntsman is E. Bawden (previously a first whip to Tucker in the Devon and Somerset). Born and bred at Hawkridge, he is the son of a fine old sporting farmer, and inherits a love and knowledge of the chase which, coupled with natural aptitude, have already landed him at the top of his profession.

In conclusion, it may be remarked that the number of packs hunting wild deer in Great Britain is, compared with foxhounds, comparatively small (seven packs in 1918). So that it is, perhaps, scarcely surprising that so few staghound huntsmen should have made a name for themselves, and that out of these only one has been an amateur huntsman, to wit, the present Master of the New Forest Buckhounds, Sir George Thursby, hunting both red and fallow deer—the latter are very cunning, though not quite such sportsmen as the former.





THE OLD STABLES, HOLNICOTE



THE OLD KENNELS OF NORTH DEVON STAGHOUNDS, HOLNICOTE

CHAPTER V

STAG-HUNTING COSTUME

ONCE took a good deal of trouble to go through a large collection of old prints and pictures entirely dealing with sporting subjects in an endeavour to follow up the changes in hunting costume during various periods. The result of this research was published in *Country Life* under the title of "The Evolution of Hunting Costume." Although really searching only for the fox-hunter's dress, I came across a certain amount of data concerning stag-hunting costume, though it must be borne in mind that early stag-hunting costume was the usual outdoor dress of the period, for down to about 1700, at any rate, no particular costume, other than that of everyday, was used for sport.

By the time a special dress was commencing to be worn for sport stag-hunting was rapidly dying out. In fact, the earliest hunting costume (A.D. 1726) mentioned especially as such is that of a fox-hunter, namely, Squire Draper, of East Beswick Hall (King's Huntsman of East Riding and apparently first M.F.H. of the Holderness), who, according to the *Druid*, "wore a long drab coat down to his heels, a leather strap round his waist, and a rusty hunting cap." I think he will live long in our memories as being the author of that famous fox-hunter's toast, "All the brushes in Christendom!"

What I *would* like to find out definitely is when "pink," scarlet, red, Mr. Jorrock's beloved colour ("No colour like red, no sport like 'unting'"), were first worn in the hunting field, particularly in the stag-hunting field. Lincoln green seems to have been the first colour worn for sport. I have seen a portrait of what appears to be one of the earliest fox-hunting squires (1740), painted, I think, by Van Halken, in which plush is worn, apparently dark green in colour. The famous "Blue and Buff," namely, the Duke of Beaufort's Hunt, wore green plush coats in their stag-hunting days (1728 to 1762), and their Hunt servants (and the Master when hunting hounds) wear it to this day, although actual plush was abandoned in favour of cloth during the late Duke's time.

The Epping Forest Staghounds wore Lincoln green with yellow or gold facings. This Hunt, sometimes known as the "Ladies' Hunt," and more often as the "Common Hunt," was very popular with the citizens of London.

STAG-HUNTING

Originally hunting red deer, it later hunted fallow, and "carted" red deer. The pack fell on evil days after Mr. W. Mellish, son of the murdered Master, gave it up in 1805, and it became extinct in due course, doubtless helped to its grave by the wit of Tom Hood! Their famous huntsman, William Dean, was immortalized by Dean Wolstenholme senior, and there was a reproduction of the picture in *The Field* of February 1927, illustrating an article by Mr. A. Brabazon Urmston, entitled "William Dean, Huntsman to the Epping Forest Staghounds."

Sir Robert Walpole, Ranger of Richmond Park, hunted, when acting as field master to the Royal Buckhounds (under George II), in green.

King George III wore a light blue coat with black cuffs and top-boots buckled behind. In 1786 he discarded the three-cornered hat for a hunting cap; his six yeomen pricklers wore scarlet and gold braid. The Master then wore gold couples and belt (insignia of office), as in much later periods; but Sir Joshua Reynolds' portrait of Mr. Jenison (Master Royal Buckhounds) shows him in green faced with red, more like the venerie coat of the Second Empire, which I believe was an exact revival of the Louis XV hunting coat, save that the Bourbon coat was blue and the Empire green (Ribblesdale).

Negro hunt servants (horn blowers) were not unknown in Georgian days (and negro musicians served in the Guard regiments). One Cato instructed gentlemen of the Court in the art of horn blowing.

Coming to later times, the Hon. Grantley Berkeley's Staghounds (who hunted a county adjoining the Royal Buckhounds) wore yellow coats and black hunting caps, a full-headed stag being embroidered on their black coat collars; his hounds were foxhounds.

Again, the driver of the deer cart to the "Queen's" (the Royal Buckhounds) wore green plush and gold lace and a top hat; but the hunt servants wore scarlet and gold and hunting caps of course (Ribblesdale).

The North Devon Staghounds, now the Devon and Somerset Staghounds, would seem, like many other Hunts, such as the Berkeley, which changed from yellow to red and back to yellow again, and the H.H., which abandoned blue for scarlet, to have changed their colour, if not their quarry, during their chequered career. My only authority for this statement is an oil painting at Holnicote dated 1750, which depicts the old house (long since burnt down, except the stables), showing in the foreground a pack of hounds returning towards kennels. (The old kennels exist to this day: see illustration.) The hunt servants are depicted as wearing *green* coats with red or pink collars, and a stirrup leather round their waists, and hung to the saddle of one of them is a deer's head, though the latter, to judge by the apparently palmated horns, is that of a fallow buck! In passing one wonders whether the Devon and Somerset ever hunted fallow deer, or whether the artist used a fallow deer as a model? A pack-bred specimen would be easy to obtain. Or (which

is most likely) was his knowledge of deer so slight that he merely depicted horns and did them "out of his head," and they came out of the latter palmed?

There is a tradition mentioned by the Hon. John Fortescue in *Stag-hunting on Exmoor* that the clerical division appeared at cover side in sober black, but each divine had a white flannel jacket strapped on his saddle which he exchanged for his black one when the pack was laid on.

In *Reminiscences of an Old West Country Clergyman*, page 153, it is mentioned: "In my time at Selworthy I was told that in old Sir Thomas Acland's days in the last century it was the custom to take a band of musicians to the meet, and when the deer was roused they played for an hour before the hounds were laid on." I am inclined to think that our clerical friend was unaware of the lengthy calls that were played on the French horn then in use, and has thus been misled into believing the hunt servants were a band of musicians! But what is interesting is that he goes on to say: "Sometimes the Baronet would hunt a stag all day, and put a peg down where he left off and return next morning to renew the chase." This is quite in accordance with the methods in use in mediæval stag-hunting.

"There are still at Killerton, near Exeter, the seat of the present Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, a china punch bowl and glasses which long graced his sideboard at Higher Combe, where for many years in the late Baronet's time the hounds were kennelled. This bowl was brought from China by the late Mr. Acland of Littlebray, and tradition says the clay from which it was manufactured, together with the rough sketch of the subject to be depicted upon it, was taken from England by Mr. Acland to be fashioned by the cunning workmen of the Celestial Empire." This extract from *The Chase of the Wild Red Deer*, by Dr. Palk Collyns, was written about 1862. A couple of years ago the author was looking at this famous bowl, which was then at Holnicote, and was at once much interested to notice that the sportsmen depicted wore red coats with yellow breeches and apparently soft-legged top-boots shaped to the leg. They had white wigs and three-cornered hats, and the huntsman wore a very long-peaked hunting cap. The horses had saddle cloths and blue or green girths. The latter, one feels sure, must be an artist's licence, as undoubtedly also was the stag. The latter is depicted as being the same size as the hounds and spotted, with antlers of Asian type—in fact, the sort of deer one would expect an Eastern artist to depict, being quite like a cheetah or axis deer. Inside are the words "Success to stag-hunting," evidently the original version of the modern toast "Prosperity to stag-hunting." I also saw at Holnicote pasted in an old copy of Collyns' *Red Deer* a catalogue of hunters the property of Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, sold at Killerton (14th July) in 1794 one "Katerfelto," a brown stallion; it has a note against it, "Died in the possession of the Revd. Jack Russell's father."

According to *The Sporting Magazine*, 1824, Katerfelto's dam was a black galloway belonging to Mr. Ahl, surgeon, of Tiverton, the sire a horse called Sportsman. Katerfelto passed through many hands (he was a dark bay, fourteen hands high) and, according to Nimrod, was sold by Mr. Russell to a Mr. Martin of Saltash, in whose possession he died aged twenty-six.

Anyone hunting with the Devon and Somerset to-day must be struck by the extraordinary variety of costume of the ratcatcher order which it is possible for a large field to assume! Any dress will do for stag-hunting, and to-day only the officials turn out in correct hunting costume. But if one reads Collyns' *Chase of the Wild Deer* with care it will be noted that he says: "Many a pink issued from the hospitable seats of the neighbouring squires on the bright autumn mornings to participate in the pleasures of the chase."

Also Nimrod (who in his short visit to Mr. Lucas's pack seems to have assimilated the most remarkable amount of knowledge) mentions in *The Sporting Magazine* as his great objection to stag-hunting that it is out of season "to see a field of sportsmen in scarlet coats and mounted on good-looking horses in one field and a crop of standing corn in another—with a burning sun, usefully employed in ripening it—and is to a fox-hunter like green peas at Christmas!" He also mentions "gentlemen who rode hard during the best months with the North Devon Staghounds pulled off their red coats and rode in silken jackets," which to a stranger must have had a novel though not an unsightly appearance.

This shows that once on a day stag-hunters did turn out correctly attired for the chase—one imagines that the great heat of summer stag-hunting settled the pink coat and tall hat fashion—and, in truth, much as one misses the panoply of the chase, it is singularly unsuited for summer hunting in the stuffy coombs of the West Country, for one is not always on the moor; fancy a pink coat and top-hat in August! Nowadays stag-hunting is probably the most democratic of all field sports. Is it not sometimes called "the holiday hunt"? No wonder ratcatcher prevails! Rather a remarkable change, since it was originally the sport of kings and nobles. In fact, perhaps it is one of the attractions of the holiday hunt, for has it not been cited as one of the charms of stag-hunting "that there are no canons of dress and very few of behaviour!"

CHAPTER VI

THE STAGHOUND

"I have thought good diligently to look (as well in the works of antiquity as also in those of our tyme) from whence the first race of Hownds did come into France."

TURBERVILLE'S *Booke of Hunting*, 1576.

I AM indebted to many authors for such information as this chapter may contain; not that all the authors are necessarily sporting authorities, but, since neither I nor any living man has seen a staghound, one must borrow from other writers and reconstruct to the best of one's ability that extinct animal, the staghound. I need hardly explain modern stag-hunting is entirely done with foxhounds. The last pack of real staghounds in England was the North Devon, sold to go abroad (according to Dr. Collyns) in 1825. But according to Nimrod they had a different fate.

Nimrod, in *The Sporting Magazine*, 1825, says whilst at Mr. Taylor's (Stockbridge, Hants) he had an opportunity of seeing Mr. Shard turn out a stag before the once far-famed (tell it not in Gath! these hounds should never have quitted the country) North Devon Staghounds, formerly the pride and delight of that romantic but secluded country.

Mr. Shard kept his deer in paddocks at Little Somborne, Hants (now the Hursley Foxhounds country); he was usually short of hounds, as the North Devon hounds were not an entire success, the Hampshire flints not agreeing with hounds of this size, so latterly he recruited his pack from the Royal Buckhounds.

There is also in *The Sporting Magazine*, October 1824, an engraving of two North Devon staghounds, Governor and Famous, from a picture by Cousins (I presume this to be from the picture still in the Collyns' family). The artist *exactly depicts* Nimrod's *description* of a staghound, and this is apparently the sole pictorial evidence we still have of an extinct type of hound!

The breeding of a bitch called Termagent of the North Devon Staghounds is somewhat enlightening. Termagent was by Mr. Parker's Bonnybell out of Mr. Quick's Tidings. She was bred by Mr. Quick, of Newton St. Cyres, Exeter, and got by Mr. F. Parker's (of Whitaway, Chudleigh) Bonnybell out of a *southern* hound called Tidings. Bonnybell to all appearances was a harrier!

"The produce of this bitch when crossed with a staghound have been extremely useful in the kennel," says Nimrod.

Lord Ribblesdale in *The Queen's Staghounds* mentions a Mr. Mellish's Hounds being lemon pies and hunting the deer (fallow) in Epping Forest up to 1805, and he states "as far as I can make out they were the foundation of the old Devon and Somerset staghounds," sold by Mr. Wear to Mr. Shard to hunt carted deer in Hampshire in 1825.

This Mr. Mellish was murdered by a footpad on his way home from hunting.

Nimrod in *The Sporting Magazine*, November 1824, after a visit to the West Country, tells us as follows: "The North Devon staghounds with one or two exceptions appear to be thoroughbred staghounds, having all the peculiarities of the breed; they are heavy, or perhaps I should say strong in the shoulder, short in their necks, slack in their loins, rather deep flewed; heads long, ears fine and pendulous, noses somewhat flat and wide, tongues deep and sonorous; very good legs and feet, and from 24 to 26 inches high. The prevailing colours are yellow, badger pie, and hare pie, not one black and white hound among them. They carry their heads high with a good scent, but will stoop to a low one, and are all line hunters, a flinging staghound being seldom met with. He endures heat better than any other sort of hound, but is very susceptible to cold."

There is also a picture of a stag at bay (the property, I believe, of Dr. Collins of Dulverton), which well shows the old heavy lemon-pied North Devon staghound. This picture also shows the first Earl Fortescue, Mr. Stuckley Lucas, the Rev. R. Bawden of Warkleigh, and the Rev. J. Boyse of Withypool, a quartet of very famous stag-hunters.

The North Devon Staghounds had twenty-five couple in kennel at the time of Nimrod's visit.

The Sporting Magazine of a later date describes a hound called Windsor as a typical staghound. He was white, with only a small yellow spot on each ear, a heavy dewlap, immense forepart, and somewhat cat hams. "Windsor, who deserves the name of *Ultimus Romanorum*, was the noblest buckhound I ever saw. He was a distinguished member of the Massy Buckhounds, a crack Tipperary pack of that day, and was presumably entered about 1820."

In 1865 Mr. Nevill (as mentioned in another chapter) was hunting carted deer in Hampshire with St. Hubert's (bloodhounds), as did Lord Wolverton (see Whyte-Melville), in the Blackmore Vale. It will be seen, therefore, that there were apparently two types of heavy staghound that derived from the southern hound, and also the bloodhound.

It is not without interest to note that the old Royal hounds were sold to go to France in 1814. Owing to George III's illness they had dwindled

by rapid degrees, according to a correspondent in *The Sporting Magazine*, "from splendour to poverty, from poverty to inability," so presumably their departure was no great loss!

The old pack (His Majesty's) turned out a deer called "Young Hendon" on April 18th, 1812, on Bracknell Common, and took him at Kingsclere after a chase lasting $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours! The distance was thirty-five miles, yet it must have been a desperately slow affair, as a boy called Gosden on a pony saw the end. Unless perchance he nicked in.

Therefore, 1814 in this case, and 1827 in the West Country, mark the dates of changing from stag- to foxhounds to hunt the deer. The substitution of the latter for stag-hunting did not present any difficulty, as of course foxhounds and fox-hunting were in full swing long before this date.

One gathers that the old staghound was desperate slow, very inbred, and consequently delicate and most susceptible to cold. On the other hand, they had plenty of tongue, and did not "change." But although the modern sporting scribe is ready to insist on the slowness of the old staghound, he is apt to infer that the contemporary foxhound was a more rapid animal. I think this is also open to doubt.

The old North Devon staghounds were taken to the meet in couples and tied to a gate, etc., whilst the tufters were at work. This was called "harling," and is done in New Forest deer-hunting to this day. Nowadays the West Country pack are kennelled in an outhouse or other farm building during tufting. That the old hounds must have been slow is proved by the great length of the chases. A letter dated September 4th, 1759, describes a run of more than seventy miles, with a kill at Lowry Gate. Again, on October 3rd, 1781, a stag found at Miller's Wood (Goodleigh) was killed at Eastwater (Horner), thirty miles. Another found in Longwood (1785) was killed at Horner Green, forty-five miles. On October 7th, 1800, after a run of six hours, hounds were stopped; many were so knocked up they reached kennel with difficulty (this was a very wet day).

Lord Derby's Staghounds (1822), which hunted Surrey and Kent for fifty years at his own expense, and which pack afterwards became the Surrey Staghounds (which survived to my day), were foxhound bred; for example, one Rally, whose portrait by Marshall is well known, was by the Cheshire Regent, and she was later put to a Belvoir dog; but they, although foxhound bred, cannot have been very rapid to take three hours and forty minutes to overtake their famous stag (Alexander). Five horses died after this hunt; but apparently this is no guide as to the pace of a run, since it pretty frequently happened in hunting in the olden days, and the reason must have been want of condition. Again, Lord Derby's Staghounds turned out a deer on Stoke Common and took it at Pickett's End, stated to be fifty miles and time $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

■

Whilst on the subject of Lord Derby's Staghounds we must not omit the famous seventy-year-old sportsman Mr. Cochran, of whom many good tales survive. He was a desperate fellow to hounds even in his old age. Once he was laid out for dead on a hurdle and a doctor was sent for. The medico enquired where to find him, and was told in such a field on a hurdle. He found both, but no Mr. Cochran, who, on coming round, had taken a swig from his flask and remounted his steed and departed! The old boy married a young wife, and used to boast he had always two new things per annum in his domestic establishment—namely, an almanac and a baby!

The demerits of the genuine staghound were both obvious and numerous, but he had one great virtue—he did not “change”; that is, he inherited from the bloodhound so sensitive a nose that he was enabled to stick to his quarry amidst others of the same kind. Peter Beckford, in Letter XV, says: “Could a foxhound distinguish a hunted fox as the deerhound does the deer that is blown, foxhunting would be perfect.” Beckford was only in the experimental stage of foxhound breeding and his hounds were far from perfect, yet I am afraid that, although the modern foxhound can and does distinguish between the failing quarry and another, that does not prevent any (save a few old trustees) from changing on to a fresh fox!

The French lay particular stress on the importance of no “change,” and in the much-afforested country in which they hunt it is of *greater* importance than in ours. Not that it would be unimportant here if one could have this quality in modern hounds without sacrificing all their other virtues.

The French have always been great hound breeders, and the Comte de Couteleux de Cantelau mentions no less than five existing varieties, eight more existing but scarce, and four extinct breeds. The ancestry of hounds is most carefully gone into in *The Manual of Venery*, by the above author, and is not without interest inasmuch as there is a description of an English southern hound. He says: “There is still a hound to be obtained in England called the southern hound which in many respects more resembles some of our old French types than any of the other breeds. He is still used in some places for hare hunting, but is already becoming very scarce. He is of rather large size, about the same height as a foxhound but narrower and lighter; head thin and bony, ears very large and hung low, his coat a sort of ‘badger’ black with fawn patches; his chest medium depth and his stern rather thick near the root. This hound is not unlike an Ariege both in shape and colour. His throat is excellent, and he is a most persevering worker. He is not a fast hound, but possesses great hunting merits.”

Charles IX in his *Traite de Chasse* lays down that hounds of every description are descended from the four royal breeds: (1) the St. Hubert; (2) the great white hound of the King; (3) the fawn-coloured hound of Brittany; and (4) the grey hound of St. Louis. The St. Hubert, our bloodhound being

the direct descendant, if not the actual animal, was much used for stag-hunting in the past, and in Henri IV's reign many were sent over to England, whilst a considerable pack was brought over by a M. de Beaumont to Queen Elizabeth.

But although the bloodhound has been used in stag-hunting down to a much later date, he has, to modern ideas, many disadvantages: he is slow and jealous, does not hunt well in a pack, and is desperately afraid of a "field" of horsemen. He will not stand "rating" and funks thick cover. But he does not "change"—at least the good ones do not—and his "nose" is infinitely superior to that of any existing breed of hound.

But the faults of the bloodhound did not pass unnoticed in the past, for Charles IX says "they are first rate for people who suffer from gout, but not for those whose business it is to shorten the life of a stag." "It is notorious Charles loved to go the pace and to mob the hunted animal," says the Comte de Couteleux de Cantelau. This same author in a somewhat disparaging chapter on the English foxhound's want of nose mentions that there are now no staghounds in England since the sale of the old North Devon staghounds, but says "many packs of foxhounds bred animals of great size—and it is quite possible they still retain some of the old staghound blood, as the stamp is quite different to the foxhound. The heads are more square, muzzles wider, lip overhanging, nostrils larger and bone heavier,—in short an undefinable something. And," he continues, "forty years ago such hounds were common enough in England."

To-day the English staghound is extinct. His successor has left the staghound strain too many generations behind to show any of the characteristics mentioned as being visible forty years ago. The modern staghound is a foxhound *pur sang*, and if he were allowed (which he is not, for some unexplained reason) would do well on the flags at Peterborough Show. The modern staghound is usually an "outsize" in foxhounds. All the extra big dog hounds from the famous packs used to go to the Devon and Somerset until post-War days, when hounds fetched such high prices that the Devon and Somerset started breeding for themselves—as they are still doing—with the result that they have now got hounds of both sexes and of a smaller size. The present huntsman is rather inclined to think (at least, so I gather) that the big hound idea was a fallacy, as the smaller sized ones have been just as successful, if not more so, in their rough country.

In conclusion, I would call the reader's attention to the following characteristics of all foxhounds who are "entered" to hunt stag: firstly, their universal tendency to run mute; and, secondly, their invariable habit of stringing out instead of running "like the horses of the sun all abreast," which is the foxhunter's ideal, and incidentally a thing one seldom sees! Another remarkable fact is that, although I have often seen foxhounds riot on deer, I never

remember seeing staghounds change from deer to fox, although they are foxhound bred. Perhaps the most remarkable exhibition of foxhound adaptability, however, is one recalled in *Sporting Reminiscences of Hampshire*. A Mr. Land, of Park House, Hambledon, kept a pack of foxhounds. He hunted deer all the summer in the Forest of Bere, and in the autumn he hunted cubs with the same hounds. After two or three days they would stick to their fox and actually go through the deer they had hunted in the summer!



"Dragon."

DEVON AND SOMERSET STAGHOUND Modern type.



NORTH DEVON STAGHOUND Extinct type.

From an old print.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHASE OF THE CARTED DEER

THIS much-debated form of stag-hunting stands, in the opinion of many, only on a par with hunting the drag. But the charge of cruelty which one still occasionally hears levelled against it is, at any rate in my opinion, unfounded. Personally I never saw a carted deer show fear at all; in fact, I can remember several occasions on which the animal preferred to feed rather than run! If, as some critics assert, the deer are actually frightened, not to say hurt, how is one to account for the fact (of which Colonel Shackle, M.S.H., informs me) that the hunted deer almost always immediately starts on his "feed" the moment he is recaptured?

The following extract from Sir Reginald Graham's *Foxhunting Recollections* (1860) shows that in fact there is little fear felt by the deer! "On hunting mornings the whole party went to the appointed fixture, the deer was given a generous start and ran until captured by the St. Hubert's (bloodhounds). When the hunt was over, the Master with his quaint establishment, the deer and the hounds all trotted home together; they seemed to be a kind of happy family who lived on friendly terms and were mutually pleased with one another, a bright example of domestic life."

I think the "damning with faint praise" attitude of other sportsmen towards hunting the carted deer is chiefly attributable to ignorance; in fact, I do not remember a really hostile critic who had first-hand evidence for his assertions.

It would appear to me that the weakest spot in carted stag-hunting is the ludicrous and untoward circumstances which must at times occur in any artificial form of sport. There is, for example, that dreadful deer who infinitely prefers to lob along the hard high road or, worse still, goes "per rail" instead of galloping over those delectable green pastures where we can disport ourselves in pursuit and jump, jump, jump. This will be the same animal who when "run up" is sure to stand to bay in someone's backyard among the washing!

Comparisons are odious, but may I be forgiven for drawing one in favour of the artificial sport? It is an axiom of carted stag-hunting that "a deer

must not be hunted as you hunt a fox." This might, I think, be taken to heart with advantage by those (fortunately few) who literally themselves pursue the wild deer. There are certain people who cannot resist "getting forward" for a view; these usually degenerate into riding the deer. Admittedly a deer is a most destructive neighbour, and it is therefore desirable to kill him; but if a deer is "ridden at," and consequently hounds are lifted to holloas, it seems to me no great triumph to overtake so visible a quarry. A witty fox-hunter of my acquaintance calls them "the liver brigade," on account of their desperate riding in pursuit of venison, and he further remarked at the same time, "Thank goodness, a fox ain't eatable!"

The carted stag is seldom hunted more than four or five times in a season, consequently his feeding (on the best of oats, beans, etc.) and exercise (which must necessarily be artificial) require considerable skill on the part of the deer-keeper. A biggish herd of deer is needed to keep even a two-day per week establishment going. The Royal Buckhounds had twenty-five deer in the Swinley Paddocks.¹

In theory, owing to his better feeding, the carted deer *should* give both longer and faster runs than the wild animal; in practice, I don't think there is much in it! It may seem faster after the carted deer because the country is enclosed and jumpable, and therefore takes more "getting over" than does the purple moor. Better horses are certainly required in the sense that they must be no mean "performers" and not merely "stag-hunters"—animals which can gallop, but of whose jumping performances you know nothing. But this, again, is a matter of enclosed country versus open, and as far as condition is concerned that is equally necessary in either case. The pace plus fences soon makes bellows to mend in the former; whilst the pace plus hills is the cause of undoing in the latter.

If there were no second string to your bow, or rather second deer in the van, you would have a superfluity of bad days, as the "calf" runs well or not according to his mood, not from fear like the wild animal. But *the* greatest difference between hunting the wild and the tame deer is that it is a cardinal sin to kill or injure the latter. This is surely in favour of the artificial form of hunting, although it must be confessed that, owing to the spread of houses and iron railings, villadom, railways, wire, and "glass," the tame animal has at various times from *these* causes come to a ghastly end. This is the fault of the spread of civilisation and not of stag-hunting. In consequence several packs, particularly the famous "Queen's" (Royal Buckhounds) and others, had to give up. You cannot have hunting even of the

¹ From Scott and Sebright, by the Druid. The Windsor deer, kept in the Swinley Paddocks and looked after by the Cotterill family for many years, numbered twenty-one. "Three runs a season is a good allowance, and they have to be kept in tip-top condition to do that—clover, hay, seven trusses between seventeen deer per week, two bushels of beans and carrots to vary matters in winter."

"let's pretend" order without cruelty under suburban conditions.¹ It is said of Charles Davis (huntsman to the Royal Buckhounds, died 1868), that greatest of staghound hunters (as he was the most perfect of horsemen and beau ideal of a Royal servant), that he was also remarkable for the fact that "season after season found the same old names in the Swinley Deer Paddocks." "The science of stag-hunting lies in the management of deer," and it is related of Davis that "his deer were nearly always taken without injury" (*The Queen's Hounds*).²

I feel I have somehow taken up the attitude of an apologist, a position which is not only unnecessary but one I am unqualified to take, considering my experience of hunting with what Mr. Jorrocks calls "muggers" is not very great. Still, I have had some, and great fun it was, if a little too much like steeplechasing for my own taste. But carted stag-hunting has still, as it always has had, its critics, and these I would merely remind that before attacking any institution it is at least advisable "to know the strong points before attacking the weak ones"! "It perhaps is not without interest to record that since the decease of the Royal Buckhounds the Norwich Stag-hounds, who hunt carted deer, are now the senior pack in England, for it is claimed they have a continuous history from the 14th century" (from *Hunting in the Old Days*).

¹ Unfortunate incidents were not unknown, however, even in earlier days. For example, to quote "His Majesty's Hounds," in *The Sporting Magazine*, 1825: "A hind, after running before hounds 26 miles, took to soil in a pond, and before hounds came up was killed by the village bulldog!"

² In the early Georgian days of hunting of semi-feral park deer the animal was killed. There is, for example, a picture by F. Wootton, dated 1737, of a stag at bay in a pond in Windsor Park in which the stag is about to be *shot*, but the sentence, "His Majesty ordered the stag's life to be spared," becomes more frequent as time goes on.

CHAPTER VIII

HORSES AND DEER

“WHEN we were very young” I have a vague recollection that *Æsop's Fables* were given to us as a prize for (problematical) good behaviour. Anyway, being a prize one had to read them, and I seem to recall one about the horse and the stag. This was to the effect that the horse, annoyed at the stag's damaging his particular pasture, asked man to assist him. The latter consented if the horse would let him put a bit in his mouth and ride him. The condition being accepted, the man mounted accordingly, and the horse, instead of getting revenge, lost his liberty! It would appear, therefore, that in fable (if not in fact) there is good reason for antipathy between the genus equine and the genus cervine! I have often thought the fable may have been suggested by an existing antipathy. Although I have never heard anyone discuss this theory, yet I have seen a good many incidents which give colour to such an idea. There is no doubt horses take an interest in deer which they do not exhibit over other animals. For deer they have apparently either fear or dislike.

The first runaway I can remember was when I was a passenger in an ancient “fly” with a still more antique horse, and the animal ran away on passing some deer in a park. My second experience was with a hiring pony on Exmoor. Coming home from hunting (September 26th, 1902) through Culbone Woods, at a cross ride my pony stopped and whirled round. I couldn't see the cause of his alarm and turned him back again, when from beneath the stunted firs came the angry roar of a stag. Round again went the pony, and I confess this time I didn't try to stop him, for I saw over my shoulder a most truculent-looking old gentleman stalk out of the undergrowth and stand in the middle of the ride daring us to come back—a challenge which I need hardly say we did not accept.

I had a roan horse bought in the Badminton country who was distinctly afraid of deer, although far from a nervous animal. I hunted him part of one season on Exmoor, and I noticed he was quick to “spot” deer and not too fond of going near them. His most remarkable feat in “spotting” was, however, in Hampshire. Passing outside a cover he stopped and blew, and evinced considerable uneasiness. Deer occurred to me, but as it was not a

deer district I dismissed this idea as most unlikely. However, the horse was right (although I had never seen deer in this district before), for next evening I saw a small herd of fallow deer emerge from the same cover.

I have now a pony, bred in Devon, who is extraordinarily quick at "spotting" deer, both in the West Country and the New Forest. But she seems to love deer, or rather their chase, as she always cocks her ears and, if you give her half a chance, dashes in pursuit! Another pony, bred in Cheshire and never having seen deer until this year, is also very quick at "spotting" them, but she betrays otherwise little interest, save a slight fear of them at close quarters.

But the most remarkable example of antipathy I ever witnessed was with the New Forest Buckhounds in April 1923. A tired fallow buck—found, if I remember rightly, in Pound Bottom—jumped into a pallsided enclosure at Minstead, in which were some brood mares feeding. Too exhausted to jump out again, he cantered round the enclosure, pursued by the brood mares. The latter made most truculent rushes at him, which owing to his exhaustion he had much difficulty in evading. He eventually got out through a broken fence and was killed by hounds. These were in-foal mares, not mares with foals at foot, be it noted.

Of a hunted stag horses have, and very rightly, a decided fear. I once saw a riderless "hireling" meet the hunted deer on a narrow path near Waters-meet. He whirled round on his haunches in a space apparently quite impossible for a horse to turn and galloped back with dangling reins and stirrups and went crashing down into the undergrowth to avoid the threatening antlers!

The number of Highland ponies (hereditary carriers of venison for generations) who object to having a stag put on them is considerable, and for that reason you frequently see a ghillie take his coat off and blindfold the pony before attempting to put up the deer. I think in this case it is the smell of blood, which all horses so dislike, that is the trouble, not merely smell of deer.

A remarkable exception to this rule was "The old Blair Pony" (as mentioned by William Serope in *The Art of Deerstalking*), who had always the honour of bringing home the Duke's deer. "It was an office he delighted in, and he was wont to evince his sense of pleasure by rubbing his muzzle in the blood."

It is, I think, the general opinion that in speed a horse is no match for a deer. Certainly this appears to be so if you try and ride a deer off a cover, for example; but given country suitable to the horse and not as it usually is entirely in the deer's favour, the position can be reversed. The late Duke of Beaufort completely "busted" a stag on horseback, and he was no light weight even in his young days. A stag got out of Badminton Park and took

up his residence in Lower Woods, where he made himself obnoxious to neighbouring farmers. In response to complaints the Duke, with some mounted sportsmen, drew the cover for him and got him "going." He headed straight for Badminton, and was so hustled by a "blood" horse over the strongly fenced grass enclosures that before he came to Badminton Park he was beat, and was overtaken and killed without difficulty by the solitary horseman. The distance would be (speaking from memory) about six miles.

CHAPTER IX

THE STAG AT BAY

SIR EDWIN LANDSEER'S picture of the stag at bay has made this subject familiar to the whole world, yet in the West Country its popularity is completely overshadowed by the print of the presentation picture to Mr. Bissett of a stag at bay by Samuel Carter, R.A. It is called, if I remember rightly, "A September Evening in Badgeworthy." This print is to be seen almost everywhere one goes in the West, yet should one, owing to a sale of effects, come into the market there is desperate bidding to get hold of the copy ! Although in part an unconscious tribute to the skill of the painter, it really shows how keen is the love of stag-hunting in the West.

The "finale" of a stag-hunt is so dramatic that it appeals to the artistic sense of every onlooker. "His strength expended and his wiles exhausted," a stag at bay, standing in some deep pool surrounded by the baying pack, is a picture of proud defiance which many artists have endeavoured to depict.

In this connection I have often heard stag-hunters criticise such pictures as being incorrect because the stag has been depicted with his mouth open ! Admittedly he often has it shut, but I have several photographs in my possession of stags at bay with their mouths wide open, which shows the danger of stating generalities as facts.

The attitude of a stag at bay when properly "run up" and unable to go further is standing with head proudly erect, mouth tight shut, and distended nostrils. Should he mean charging, frequently, if not invariably, you will see him twist his under-jaw to one side, rather the motion of grinding one's teeth. It is a difficult position to depict, as it looks like dislocation. If the stag is only "busted"—that is, has been run exceedingly fast for only a short distance and brought to bay more through his own fatness and shortness of breath than real exhaustion—he will probably have his mouth wide open.

I heard rather an amusing criticism of a stag picture in a Porlock shop window some years ago. Two farmers were looking at it, and one remarked, "Tis no Exmoor stag—must have done he at the Zoo." Second farmer : "Aye, and gone to the wrong cage to do 'un !"

Picturesque though the final scene may be, for both sporting and humanitarian reasons every effort is made to shorten it and to keep the hounds away from the deer, the stag being captured and killed by his human foes, not by the hounds, be it noted.

It is rather remarkable that although a stag at bay is both savage and strong very few accidents occur, the more so since great stress is laid on the fierceness of the stag in all the old books on venerie. Does not one author (De Fouilloux) state he knows of so many fatal accidents that he only quotes one! The probable truth of the matter is that in the olden days hounds were very slow—in fact, we know a chase occasionally lasted two days—so that hounds were probably as tired as the deer and unwilling to do much in the way of baying, much less attacking, tired deer. Moreover, the deer was probably more leg weary than exhausted, and consequently a great deal more full of fight than are the stags of to-day, which are fairly raced to death on a good scenting day by fast modern foxhounds. Explain it as you will, the fact remains that the old-time sportsmen had a proverb to the effect "After the Boar the leech, after the Hart the bier," which exactly reverses our modern ideas of dangerous animals.

It is quite difficult in fact to recall real "fighting" stags amongst the many one has seen taken. "The switch-horned stag of Haddon," who died fighting with two normal horns at Couple Ham, scratching such horses as came within his reach, and the old one-horned stag of Cothelstone, who charged the field at Kingston St. Mary, were two "proper" scrappers, and are mentioned in Mr. Evered's *Stag-hunting on Exmoor*. The "great" stag (the St. Audrie's head), said to be the finest wild trophy ever secured in the British Isles, showed no fight at all, in spite of or possibly because of his massive proportions. In modern times (1925) the most determined fighting stag I can hear of was a little two-year-old, with "uprights" only, who charged the huntsman in Red Cleeve. This youngster was "run up" by two or three couples. The huntsman was with the smaller lot of hounds, and, finding this animal run up with these few hounds, he endeavoured to take him. On his dismounting, this gallant little beast, knocking over the intervening hounds, charged and, in spite of several heavy blows from the hunting-crop, his antlers got home in Ernest Bawden's leg just above the knee. He then faced the huntsman, intending, doubtless, to charge again, though possibly somewhat daunted by his reception. At this moment help arrived in the shape of a sporting farmer, who threw himself into the fray and turned the scales of victory.

Some years "agone," as they say in the West, a September stag put up a fine fight at Luxboro. Very tired he was, being chased up a narrow lane by the pack, with the huntsman following behind. Presently, owing probably to the steepness of the hill being too much for him in his exhausted state,



RUN UP! ON DRY LAND
(Deer usually come to bay in water)



THE SUBSTITUTE

he charged back again down the lane, meeting the huntsman, S. Tucker, going up. The latter's grey horse was badly gored by the stag as it passed, a shocking wound being caused. The stag then met a stranger, who hastily fell off as his horse was in turn attacked. As this horse galloped off riderless the stag struck it in the buttocks repeatedly. The terrified animal then jumped a gate, with the stag on its heels; but on the other side the horse "jinked" up under the fence, whilst the tired but angry stag blundered on down to the river, and shortly after was taken and killed.

From time to time one hears of people taking exception to the method by which deer are killed—namely, stabbed to the heart, a method which was introduced to the West Country by King Edward VII. (In the old days they always cut the stag's throat.) It may interest those critics to hear the other side of the question. There are two objections to the introduction of firearms, often quoted before, which still hold good. One is the difficulty of being certain of killing the deer without the risk of causing injury to either hounds, horses, or members of the Field. Secondly, and not less important, there is the strong objection which naturally exists to the use of firearms against either fox or stag. In actual fact a friend tells me she saw an attempt to finish a stag with firearms recently when hunting with a French pack of staghounds. The stag was in a lake and the huntsman tried to shoot him from the bank, but hit him in his neck, and he swam about "blating" with pain for a considerable time after.

Unfortunate accidents, of course, occur in every sport, but I think it is at least doubtful if the gun is really as merciful as the knife. Probably the time will come when deer will be despatched with the humane killer. There are obstacles to its use, but I do not personally believe they are absolutely insurmountable.

The behaviour of hounds when they bring a stag to bay is generally that of the mosquito to the human being—they make the deuce of a lot of noise and bite where they get a chance, but usually they have enough respect for their quarry to keep well away and bay at him. I have seen exceptions, and I remember a real fighting stag which hounds literally went for in the Lyn. There was a pretty scrum, in which several hounds were injured before the deer decided they were too many for him, and going down with the current, went over a small fall and was drowned. The river was in heavy flood at the time.

Again this year (1925) hounds went at, and bowled over like a rabbit, a "rutting" stag on the closing day of the stag-hunting season.

Generally speaking, if a deer can get his back protected by some natural or artificial obstacle he can well hold his own; but, again, there was an exception when hounds rushed their deer and pulled him out of a porch. I did not see this latter incident.

In case I have given the impression that the stag at bay is a most dangerous adversary, let me hasten to add there is at least one authentic instance of a stag being taken single-handed.

The huntsman has a theory that the occasional vicious, pugnacious stags that show much fight on being "run up" are the ones that were captives in their youth. Local farmers' wives are rather fond of bringing up calves, but nearly always abandon them, as almost without exception they become not only a nuisance, but dangerous as they grow up.

Perhaps another Exmoor story may be allowed to conclude this chapter.

An American went up to the Master at a kill and requested he might have a trophy. The Master, always most polite, replied, "I'm so sorry, but all the 'slots' are promised to ladies." The visitor: "But, say, couldn't you give me something as a trophy—a bit of his horns, for example?" The Master: "Well, I'm most frightfully sorry, but you see unfortunately we don't carry a saw!"



"THE HARBOURER" (A morning's harbouring)

CHAPTER X

A MORNING'S HARBOURING

AS fox-hunting depends on good earth stopping, so does wild stag-hunting depend on good harbouring. By comparison the latter has the advantage, that in the more important packs a professional harbourer is retained, while the fox-hunting usually depends on the somewhat casual efforts of gamekeepers, whose very profession does not predispose them favourably to the vulpine race. Beyond this point, however, little comparison can be made, so utterly different are the two sports. The great difference may be summed up in the statement that while any fox will do to hunt, for stag-hunting a particular deer is required. It will be thus seen how important is the duty of the harbourer, and any stag-hunter who has seen the results of amateur harbouring, or, worse still, of no harbouring at all, will verify this statement.

In France, the home of hunting, even greater importance is attached to this official than with us. Not infrequently the French huntsman does his own harbouring, which must be desperately hard work! Briefly, the harbourer's duty is to locate so exactly a warrantable (hunnable) stag as to be able to take the huntsman to the spot and ensure that hounds be laid on to this particular deer and no other. This demands great knowledge of woodcraft, keen observation, and the faculty of sifting the truth out of intelligence received from local inhabitants. Perhaps the simplest way of explaining the methods of a harbourer is to describe a particular day's work.

On the day before hunting the harbourer leaves home and rides over to some farm in close proximity to the following day's meet. At tea-time we find the entire household in the farm kitchen in conversation with the harbourer, everyone speaking at the same time and no one listening to his neighbour, while that official courteously listens to our chatter and swallows a little tea and much information (for what it is worth!) simultaneously. After which we stroll out to the kitchen-garden and show him, with a mixture of pride and indignation, where the deer have been playing havoc with the "taters" on the previous night. (The wire sheep-netting on the top of the high stone-faced banks, despite its outward inclination, fails to keep them out. Not that they are hungry; there are oats, barley, wheat, roots, and

pasture in plenty close at hand, but for the moment they only fancy "taters"! Here we get the first glimpse of the harbourer's methods. Casually strolling round, he lifts the "haulm" of the potatoes and points to the "slot," clearly shown where the sun has not got at it to dry and crumble its clear definition.

"A young male deer and several hinds," he remarks. Then, going outside, he shows us the faint impress (unseen by me previously) where they have jumped out again at dawn. The bruised blades of grass, then wet with dew, still show a faint track, and the sharp-pointed hoofs have cut quite clear impressions on the actual spot of impact in landing over the leap.

Then more "staggy" talk, and the reliable information boils down to this: that for some weeks past a "girt" stag and a young male deer have been lying on the "Ball" and that two of us saw them last night at 6.45 p.m., but that this afternoon a neighbour rode close by the spot with his dogs, collecting sheep for dipping, so possibly they may have been disturbed.

At 7 p.m. we take our glasses and ourselves to the hill, and from the distance of half a mile or so keep watch on the locality where we had previously seen them. With glasses we can distinctly see the trampled fern where they have been lying and moving about, but no deer are visible. Nevertheless, after an hour's silent vigil, the harbourer says, "Is that the younger deer?" It may be, but I cannot see him! "There he is, under the oak by the stone scree." Now I see him. At least I think I do, but am not sure. Thus we wait on, in the rapidly falling dusk; but no "girt" stag appears, so back to supper and early to bed.

At 4 a.m. the harbourer knocks at my door. Bundling on my clothes and two waistcoats ('tis chilly, even in August, at 4 a.m.), I go down to the kitchen. Mine host and the farm hands are already up, and "staggy" tales are being swapped even at this early hour, to the accompaniment of scalding hot tea. How old A., the keeper of —, "harboured" a pig in some trees and fern near his house and told the harbourer he had "marked down a 'girt' stag," how he took him there to show him the slot! and how, to the great amusement of the one and the indignation of the other, the harbourer then poked a somnolent old pig out of the bracken with a stick! and so forth.

But a truce to reminiscence; it is now *petit jour* and time to be off. "You go off to the top of the valley, I'll take the foot of the combe," says the harbourer; and with a "Good luck" he fades away into the universal greyness before the dawn.

Harbouring is made difficult or easy by a great variety of circumstances, weather and conformation of country being the chief factors. The harbourer does not take out an assistant with him, a second party being totally unnecessary and usually an encumbrance. My presence on this occasion is to be credited to his courtesy, not to my skill.

In an enclosed part of the country local intelligence supplies the information

that a stag or stags are "using" certain corn or root fields. The previous night's stroll round the locality usually verifies or otherwise the truth of these statements. A big stag leaves behind tell-tale evidence of his presence by the shape and size of his slot (footmarks). On the morning of the hunt the aim of the harbourer is to see without being seen; but as this is also the aim of the stag, the harbourer does not usually attempt to see his quarry unless circumstances are very much in his favour and risk small; he therefore usually depends on accurate slotting (tracking), following by this means his quarry to cover.

The harbourer's art is certainly not one of those that can be "taught by post," even supposing that be possible with any other profession, which personally I doubt. Woodcraft is an art in which the British have never greatly excelled. Nevertheless, the West Country has produced several masters of woodcraft whose names are as well known in the locality as those of the huntsmen and Masters of hounds. It is decidedly difficult to explain methods in which so much depends on wind and weather; but, roughly, a stag leaves tracks which can be read like print. The trained eye can tell the age and approximate weight of a stag from his slots, while the semi-trained eye can barely distinguish between the slots of stag and hind, and the novice finds it difficult to differentiate between the footmarks of sheep, pigs, and calves, or deer of either sex! All these animals, be it remembered, thickly inhabit the same country.

Nor, although the signs be there, is it *always* easy, even for the expert, to read them! Grass, except when wet, takes little impression. Hot weather makes the ground so hard that no impression at all is left. Heavy rain will wash out the most obvious footprint in a very short time. But there are certain auxiliary signs which are helpful. For example, male deer have their peculiarities of feeding, and so have hinds. On the other hand, an old stag, in the early stages of senile decay, with a shrinking "head" and smaller body, shows also a smaller slot than a big stag—in fact, there are pitfalls for the careless on every hand! The unthinking say it is a wonderful sight to see a local sportsman slot a deer up a road, yet, given a wet, muddy surface, it is not a very wonderful feat. It is almost daily rivalled by huntsmen of fox or hare who will "prick" their quarry over wet ground when scent fails, and their quarry is less than half the size! What is marvellous is the eyesight that can follow the faint impressions left on grass, moss, and sandy soil, defeated by hard and stony patches, yet able to follow the particular quarry, although often only helped by the one or two plain impressions left at wide intervals. All the time one must (unconsciously, perhaps) keep an eye for a sight of the deer and carefully observe the wind in case keen noses shall detect one's presence. No, the harbourer's art is impossible to communicate, and nearly as impossible to learn.

Having tracked his quarry to cover, if the latter is not too big, the harbourer goes round it to the far side to see that his deer has not come out again. If all is well he betakes himself to some little distance and keeps watch on the cover, to see the deer does not become "the deer departed," until about 9 a.m., when deer lie down for the day. After that time there is little risk of their leaving the spot before night. The harbourer can then safely go back to breakfast and afterwards ride on to the meet and make his report to the Master. In a heavily wooded country the same procedure can be followed, but much more skilful tracking is required, the animal having to be marked down in a particular portion of cover, and this can only be done by very careful slotting up the woodland rides. In some parts of the country adjoining the moorland different and less arduous tactics can be followed, as in the present instance.

It is getting lighter fast, and I take a careful survey with my glasses. The first moving object visible is a poaching cat, returning homewards down the valley! Now the first pink gleams of sunlight begin to warm up the universal greyness; this surely should be the signal for the deer to return. However, they haven't been disturbed since spring stag-hunting, and early in the season they are not so shy and careful to conceal themselves before people are about, so I expect I am in for a long vigil, only to be enlivened by the bites of gnats, which have appeared simultaneously with the first beams of sunlight!

I am nearly asleep when suddenly a fox carrying the business end of a rabbit pops on to the bank just below. He has a prolonged stare at me; evidently he cannot make out what I am (if one keeps quite still, most animals are puzzled). But the (by me) unfelt and scarce-moving breeze must carry the tainted air to his delicate nostril, for he jumps off the bank and trots off with the stiff and mincing gait peculiar to "Charles Edward" when not in a hurry—stopping and glancing back from time to time with a comically puzzled air. A few rabbits pop out of their burrows the moment he has gone: save for the distant "baa" of a sheep the silence is unbroken. At 6 a.m. a sleepy old cock pheasant flusters down from a neighbouring tree and saunters off down the combe. Some of the little horned sheep and their now big lambs come slowly feeding through the gorse. I notice one old ewe, suckling a lamb, intently watching something. From out of the gorse strolls fox number two; the sheep glance at him and go on with their breakfast. The feeding rabbits sit up and watch him, but there is, to my astonishment, no hurried race for burrows. "Charles" slips in and out of the gorse and quickly fades away as silently as he came; the rabbits resume their interrupted meal. At 7 a.m. I see three red forms shoulder deep in the fern about a mile away. The glasses show them to be hinds. Visibility is getting bad, and a thin rain is coming on—quite warm, but distinctly wetting!



"DAWN ON DUNKERY" (A morning's harbouring)

This won't do! I must use my glasses more carefully in case it gets more misty. I take the hills opposite and work them up and down in small sections with the glasses. Not a stag anywhere. Only a hind with a yearling calf and a small calf strolls in from the moor. Presently I also see another hind and spotted calf, the former rearing up and pulling down the branches of an ash—or quickbeam, as the mountain ash is called in the West Country.

At 8.15 I hear the clatter of a horse's hoofs in the lane and up comes the harbourer. "Seen anything?" "No!" "Neither have I, except a small male deer. The big stag must have shifted his quarters. This won't do. I must be off and try elsewhere." And, glasses in hand, he canters off up the lane to see what his luck will be further on.

Matters are now looking serious. The meet is at 11 a.m. and no deer yet harboured. I tramp off on to the moor and search combs and covers with glasses. Several hinds and calves, and one small male deer with little uprights, are all I find. At nine o'clock breakfast is clearly indicated, and I return to find mine host has also gone off harbouring, having heard the professional has not seen anything either. But at 9.30 a.m. he returns, equally unlucky. A few minutes later, however, the harbourer comes trotting back. His face shows that all is well. "'Tis all right; I've seen three huntable stags. They be up the combe, laying down in — Wood. One has three atop both sides; one two on one side and three the other; and the third I couldn't see his head very clear for bushes in the way." The situation is now saved, and none too soon—it is getting very near time for hounds to arrive. But the very lateness of the hour ensures the deer not moving again, so the harbourer can now safely sit down to his well-earned, if belated breakfast.

CHAPTER XI

SOME NOTES AND JOTTINGS ON THE WEST COUNTRY DEER

ON August 6th, 1924, whilst with the harbourer on Cloutsham Ball I saw an old one-horned stag come and lie down in the fern, accompanied by a small pricket. About half an hour later he was followed by a 10-point and 9-point stag. The moment these two entered the fern to lie down he jumped up and chased them up and down the paths until they left the neighbourhood. This was presumably done lest they should draw attention, or hounds' noses, to his lair. Stags in velvet carry their heads high, with antlers laid back when in cover, to avoid contact with the sensitive horn; but stags also do this when clean of velvet, when hunted and anxious not to attract notice and to be able to move away silently.

Exmoor deer are not nearly so shy as Scotch deer, yet are difficult to approach once the hunting season has started. I saw a big stag at dawn on Stoke Ridge cleaning his horns on an old wire fence. The wind was in my favour and I was out of sight in the ditch beside the road. Yet he took alarm, and I believe my presence was given away by a rabbit bolting across the road. On the other hand, deer have a very good idea of who is harmless and who is not, for I remember a stag feeding at noon (when, by the way, they usually are lying down and invisible) above the road near Horner Mill. He was in full view of a picnic party, and although they holloa'd and made hunting noises—not very good imitations, I must admit—he only raised his head once and then went on feeding.

On the other hand, I have got almost within touching distance of wild deer—twice accidentally, once by stalking. The first time I came through an open gateway (downhill) into a field and almost collided with a stag who was standing watching the hill above and behind me. Apparently he had heard me, but imagined I was much further away (it was very windy). Another time I was fox-hunting on the moor, and on galloping up a path I saw a stag lying just above the path, not five yards away. Thinking he was hurt, I jumped off to look at him. This *did* frighten him, and he jumped up and went crashing away through the undergrowth. I once got within eight yards (measured) of a hind in Bagley Cleeve. It was very windy and heavy rain. She had got my wind and was watching for me up above, but

IN VELVET (EXMOOR)

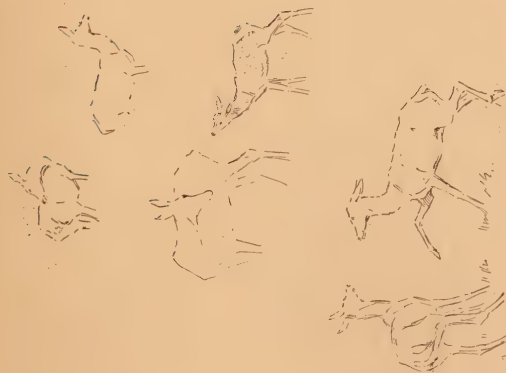
From a Drawing by Lionel Edwards





E

STUDIES OF STAG CALF.



Handwritten signature and date: 1891

YOUNG HINDS AT PLAY.

by coming down to her level and approaching from tree to tree I put her wrong, and she never saw me until I appeared from round the next tree to that under which she was sheltering!

It has often been stated that twin calves are unknown; this theory has been disproved many times, but it dies hard. Twin calves are not uncommon in the West Country. Writing in 1923, I see I mention "there was a hind with twin calves in Bagley Cleeve this summer. She was remarkable for the fact that she barked at everyone." (I don't think Exmoor hinds bark as freely as Highland deer—at least, I haven't heard them do so as often.) In the spring of 1925 I saw these two calves (both hinds) still together; they were feeding in the "rabbit" field almost every evening. But mother had gone the way of all flesh during the previous winter.

I remember seeing a hind in August with a big and small calf at foot. She interested me because on catching my wind she abandoned her offspring. The big calf immediately hid itself in the fern, but the little one ran about looking for mother. I waited half an hour and the hind returned and picked up the older calf, but when I left she was still seeking the little one, which had wandered off in the opposite direction.

Again, I came suddenly on a hind and calf in Sweetworthy. She jumped the fence at a big place where the calf could not follow. I cut him off whilst he was looking for a weak place, and got him into an angle of the fence, when I proceeded to sketch him. He was a plucky little "staggard" and quite ready to defy me. Within a few minutes of my letting him go the hind picked him up. She had been watching me from behind some larches all the time!

It is most observable in the hot days of August that a hot sun after rain entirely obliterates scent. The huntsman says it is the drawing up of the damp, and scent therefore rises, pointing in proof to the noticeably strong scent of the earth, flowers, etc., to the human nostrils. This state of atmosphere indeed is worse than sunbaked *dry* ground.

On deer entering water the scent is carried down so long as the deer *remain in it*, and providing the volume of water is not *too* great and rapid. In such case hounds, striking water below where the deer entered, can usually pick it up, as scent is coming down to them. But if they have left it and the "wash" from where they were only comes down, hounds are apt to follow this down in the opposite direction. It does not take them long, however, to discover their error, as the scent quickly dies, of course, the further it goes.

Hinds with calves at foot if they are not unduly pressed by the enemy pick the weak places in fences and run the paths, so that the calves can follow easily. If quickly pursued, knowing that with their weak, ungainly movements the youngsters cannot keep up, the mother pushes the little one down in the fern, where it lies like a stone, whilst she draws the pursuit away until she can return in safety later.



SILENCE IS GOLDEN

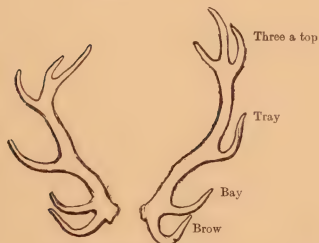
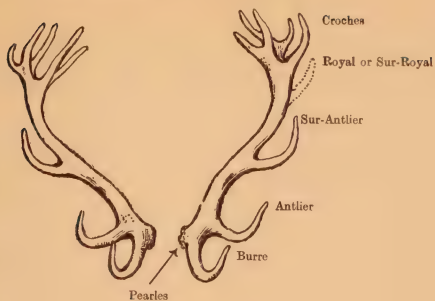
Deer are very determined, not to say obstinate, if they have found something that tickles their palate. One winter a small herd of stags went every night down a main road between high deer fences to feed on certain root crops not yet in clump; they were deterred several nights by a lighted lamp hanging on the road fence, but soon discovered the fraud and went raiding as before. It was then discovered that if the lamp was put in a new place every night they dare not pass, and this defeated them until the crop was gathered. But that they still go down into the vale at night I know, for coming home in the early hours of darkness before the dawn I shot round a corner in the car plump into a herd of deer at this very spot, and they had to gallop their best up the lane as the deer fences on each side were unjumpable!

Next to deer netting, tarred rope is the most effective deterrent—no animal will get tar on its coat if it can help it. Foxes hate it—a fact well known to gamekeepers. Of scarecrows or boggarts deer soon take little notice, very quickly deciding them to be harmless.

I remember once spending a Sabbath day getting hay up into "cock," as it looked like rain (it generally does on Exmoor!). That night it *did* rain, and a confounded stag amused himself by knocking down the hay cocks during the night! I might add hay is frequently not "in" until late August or even later in wet seasons in the West. The ruses of the hunted stag are limited to "change," squatting, running to herd, beating the water, sinking themselves in deep water except for the nostrils, and going to sea, all of which have been often and faithfully described by authors ancient and modern—"He will lie flat downe upon his bellie in some of their layres and so let hounds overshoot him, and because they should have no scent of him nor vent him, he will truss at his IV feet under his belly. I have seen houndes passe by such an Hart within a yard of him," so says Turberville, and it is true to this day. Later he says of a beaten deer, "If he espie a man before him he rayseth up his head and maketh great bounds and leaps on high as though he was lustie and freshe—but such friskes will not last long, for when he is past of he will stretch his neck agayne and hold down his head and reel and wallow as before sayde." Now this sounds rather "tall" to modern ears, yet I hesitate to criticise, for I once saw a beaten stag do something of the sort. I was standing beside my very blown horse on Leyhill. The tired and hunted stag was down in the water far below me; hounds' voices and the "whistle" proclaimed it was nearly the end, then a long silence. Presently I heard heavy breathing, and a very tired stag came lumbering past me up the slope. Just as he came alongside he saw me, and he seemed galvanised by fright into violent action. Very different to his approach was his departure. But a hundred yards further on, with lowered head and reeling stride, he turned downhill again to the water and death. There is one characteristic of the

red deer, indeed of all deer, that I cannot remember having ever seen mentioned in print, namely, his laziness. He may be proud as a Spanish noble, but he is also more idle ! It is often noted that stags watch the opposite sex being hunted with complete unconcern—and I have heard that West Countrymen express the opinion that they know quite well when stag-hunting ends and hind-hunting begins. It may be so ; but deer of either sex, both red and fallow, are lazy beasts, and much that is put down to cunning is sheer laziness. No deer will run unless it is obliged to—either wild or carted—and they never move off faster or further than they need. Fallow depend more on immobility than red, but both will remain motionless if they think they are undetected. Fallow are far harder to see, not only because they are smaller, but because their colour, especially the colour of their legs, blends most extraordinarily well with the undergrowth in which they stand. In Goldsmith's *Animated Nature*, published about 1780, we read : "The stag is capable of being tamed, when it becomes rather petulant and dangerous, and also of being trained to various uses, even to drag a phaeton. Among the various experiments of a sporting nature performed by the late Lord Oxford, perhaps none was more eccentric than his determination to drive four red-deer stags in a phaeton instead of horses, and these he had reduced to perfect discipline for his excursions and short journeys upon the road. But unfortunately, as he was one day driving to Newmarket, their ears were saluted with the cry of a pack of hounds, which, soon after crossing the road in the rear, caught sight of the four-in-hand and commenced a new kind of chase, with 'breast-high' alacrity. The novelty of the scene was rich beyond description ; and in vain did his Lordship exert all his charioteering skill, in vain did his well-trained grooms energetically endeavour to ride before them. Reins, trammels, and the weight of the carriage were of no effect, for they went with the celerity of a whirlwind, and this modern Phaëthon, in the midst of these electrical vibrations of fear, bid fair to experience the fate of his namesake. Luckily, however, his Lordship had been accustomed to drive this set of 'fiery-eyed' steeds to the Ram Inn at Newmarket, which was most happily at hand, and to this his Lordship's most fervent prayers and ejaculations had been ardently directed. Into the yard they suddenly bounded, to the consternation of hostess and stable boys, who seemed to have lost every faculty upon the occasion. Here they were luckily overpowered, and the stags and his Lordship were all instantaneously huddled together in a barn, just as the hounds appeared in full cry at the gate."

One not infrequently hears it stated that present day deer have nothing like such fine heads as in the past. Stags' horns found in Irish bogs, Scotch peat hags, and the sands of Morecambe Bay certainly far outstrip modern antlers, especially Scotch ones. But in the West Country I think there are a few heads just as good to-day as in the past. I have not had the advantage



MODERN, WEST COUNTRY.
NOMENCLATURE OF ANTLERS (ANCIENT AND MODERN).



OLD HEADS (Circa 1750).

Sketched in Holnicote Stables. The head shown on the left has had brow antlers sawn off.

of seeing the heads at Castle Hill, but speaking from those at Holnicote and comparing with modern examples, the latter are distinctly superior. There are several interesting ones among the old Holnicote heads, notably one killed in 1792 at Rawleigh Mills, the peculiar hook formation of antlers being most uncommon. But there is no extra massive head as far as beam is concerned, or one with an exceptional number of points. (There is also a fine head, killed much later, 1877, at Holnicote.) It must be borne in mind, however, that the great collection of antlers at Holnicote was destroyed, I understand, when that house was burnt down in 1794, and those in the stables would probably be only those of little account.¹

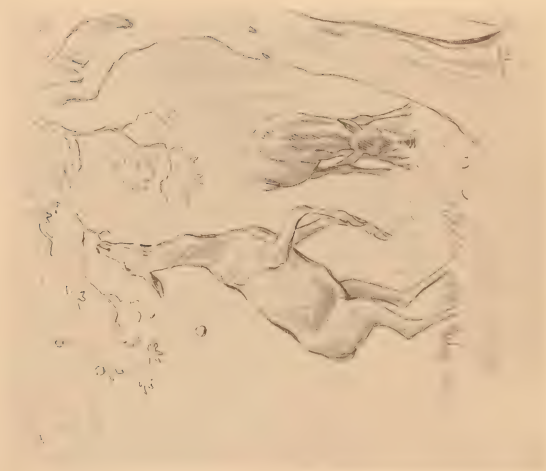
Collins mentions an old stag, known as the Badgeworthy deer, killed 1786, who had seven on top one side and six the other. He had all his rights, making him nineteen points. Another 19-pointer was killed in 1871. The idea that one could tell a deer's age by its horns is practically exploded, and beyond a certain age it is impossible to tell by the teeth even. All that is certain is that the antlers "go back," that is, are not so large or so many-pointed in an old deer. Experiments in marking wild deer and thus tracing their ages in comparison with antlers, has proved that the latter are a most uncertain guide. In actual fact the ear-marking by farmers of immature deer caught and released again, or saved from hounds on account of their tender years, really proves very little, as usually the casual agriculturist forgets to write down the date of marking and the animal's age at the time.

Although a digression, the following incident is not without interest. The huntsman has a pair of horns picked up on Haddon under peculiar circumstances. In a spring stag-hunting a deer was "roused" and passed the huntsman with his horns intact. He was lost and fresh found in some holly bushes with one horn. Bounding past the huntsman, he dashed through a fence and landed the other side without this horn either. It was picked up at once, and the huntsman telling the keeper where he had seen him previously, the other was picked up in the holly bushes next day. There are at present (1925) fewer good heads about than for many years, the result of heavy snaring during the food shortage of the War. The stags were very freely caught as compared with the hinds. (Thirty deer were killed in Horner alone by this method.) The result is a shortage of good heads now, though, of course, some are coming on.

The greatest number of stags killed by hounds was forty-four in forty-three days' hunting. This was, I think, in 1905, and, curiously enough, practically none of these gave good sport, whilst the following season was excellent.

The greatest number in a year's hunting was during Sir Robert Sanders' mastership—namely, 179 stags and hinds. I was told this record had been beaten by one at a previous date, but I have not the details.

¹ Holnicote was burnt down in 1794 and again in 1851.



GREEN APPLE HARVEST

Hinds in an Orchard.



HIDE AND SEEK

Hunted stag squatting in the fern, Sweetworthy.

Snaring deer was a temporary innovation, but although it was realised that it might lead to others doing it comparatively little poaching exists. But a miserable looking stag with a magnificent head was recently killed, after no hunt to speak of, and was found to have a rope snare almost through his wind-pipe. "Cruel devils!" as the huntsman remarked.



Killed September 23rd, 1922.



Killed August 1920.

TWO WEST COUNTRY HEADS.

Mr. J. G. Millais, in *British Deer and their Horns*, under "Wild Stags' Heads," apparently does not think much of West Country heads. He makes one remark to the effect that "the few English wild deer that are left have no better beam than those of the Highlands." This appears to me a somewhat remarkable statement, as the most noticeable feature of West Country heads is their rough and massive beam—in fact, by that alone one could almost tell them from Highland heads (though both would be completely eclipsed by

park heads). Taking the inside span of various heads of British deer exhibited at the Royal Water Colour Society's Galleries in 1913, I can find little difference between the best English and Scotch heads, so that the other theory that heads grown in the Highlands and similar open spaces are superior in spread to those grown in woodland country does not seem to bear examination, although the theory on the surface would appear to be sound enough.

I have often been struck by the different points of view of the West Countrymen and the Highlander on the subject of heads. They apparently admire totally different characteristics. I have never heard a genuine West Countryman become enthusiastic over spread, for example. Again, a royal (twelve points) would not, as such, appear to him anything remarkable; they are common enough on Exmoor, where, moreover, the term "royal" is never used. A good royal would be in West Country parlance "three atop both sides and all his rights"—quite a good head, but not an exceptional one. No; listen to a West Countryman talking stag—a subject of which he is never weary—and it will be "a girt stag three atop both sides and all his rights" and "so big as a bullock her be." I entirely agree that a wide span is essential to a perfect head, and that a hoop head is hideous; but I think a massive head with, say, fourteen points knocks spots off the widest span with, say, twelve only.

The weights of Scotch and West Country deer present some difficulty when one seeks to get a genuine and fair comparison, the methods of weighing being so different. Very few Scotch sportsmen weigh really clean, as heart and liver are often left in—at least, so I am informed by a well-known stalker. Again, a stag left out on the hill in the wet weighs more. Rumour saith this is ofttimes done!

I have no personal experience of weighing Scotch deer, so the reader must get at the comparison by noting the following West Country methods and weights. I give the weight of two heavy deer, weighed clean by West Country method (which is VENISON ONLY, please remember), and also the comparative weights of the parts of a stag which Mr. Wallace cut up and weighed for me.

WEIGHT OF WEST COUNTRY DEER

Stag killed July 19th, 1895, at Steart—a 14-pointer, 11 st. 7 lb. minus head and slots, clean and dry—stood before hounds three hours in spite of his weight.

Colonel Wiggin has at Exford the head of a stag killed September 23rd, 1922, which, apart from rather a fine head, weighed 15 st. clean—300 lb.

- Clean.* Without his head, which weighed 73 lb.
 „ heart, liver, and lights—not weighed.
 „ kidneys and fat, which weighed 20 lb.
 „ slots—not weighed.

Comparative Weights (parts of stag)—

Heart	.	.	.	2 lb. 8 oz.	} Weight of this Scotch stag, with heart and liver left in, 15 st. 10 lb.
Liver	.	.	.	4 " 6 "	
Front slot	.	.	.	1 " 6½ "	
Hind slot	.	.	.	1 " 5½ "	
Head and horns	.	.	.	15 "	
Head and neck	.	.	.	31 "	

The stag-hunting season 1925–1926, which finished with a meet at Slowley on April 24th, was remarkable for Ernest Bawden having taken thirty-one stags in thirty days without a break—a remarkable performance which reflects great credit on the huntsman and hounds. Probably the best hunt—at any rate, of the spring portion of the season—was a 13½-mile point on April 10th (Selworthy Wood to Syndercombe). The Quantock Staghounds also had a remarkable hunt on April 19th from Bloomfield Common to near Durston Station.



CURIOUS MALFORMATION

A one-horned deer killed by the Devon & Somerset S.H.

The brow is really the beam of the original horn, as it shows the burr, while the new horn has grown from the back. When killed, the old horn was in velvet and the new horn clean. It was thought at first the old horn was merely a damaged brow tine, but when put in the boiler the velvet came off, showing the burr and proving it to be the original antler.

CHAPTER XII

DEER POACHING

MY collaborator having written a most interesting chapter on this subject, I will confine myself to a very few remarks, and would like to remind my readers once again that, while the severity of forest laws never stamped out poaching, the entire removal of all laws protecting deer does not seem to have greatly increased it. Contrariwise, it would be idle to say there is none. An old saw has it that "the onlooker sees most of the game," and as such I possibly have heard and seen more than I was intended to.

Curiously enough, people are far less guarded in their speech in conversing with a comparative stranger than they are with resident neighbours. That deer are occasionally killed by snare and gun in the West Country is undoubted, but without exception the names of these poachers are well known and they are "taboo," whilst a few others, possibly innocent, are "suspects." But West Country poaching is not of a very serious order—at any rate, at present. A few ill-disposed farmers both kill deer and claim from the deer damage fund—so at least gossip has it—whilst a very, very few shoot for the pot, and an odd one or two may slay a deer, in a fit of exasperation, when catching deer *in flagrante delicto* in their crops. But that there is any traffic in venison I do not believe. Venison, outside the West Country, is not sufficiently popular as a food, although it is cheap, if not cheaper than other meat. Those tales one hears of carcases being shipped in colliers to Bristol, etc., from certain West Country ports are, I think, merely "tales." Moreover, although Collyns warns his readers against certain plausible gentlemen who traffic in heads, I am pretty certain no such traffic nowadays exists. Why should it? Any taxidermist can supply at a most moderate figure far better "heads" (i.e. horns) than ever could be obtained from the West, even the best of the latter country's deer being far inferior to easily obtained park animals.

Collyns tells us much about poaching in his day, and a tale of more recent happenings may be not without interest.

A stag running practically "in view" of the hounds was seen to jump on a fence and disappear through it. Up to that moment hounds had been

giving tongue freely, but when they in turn passed through the fence there was silence. On arriving on the scene, the huntsman found the stag had jumped straight into a wire snare and had broken his neck! The hounds grouped around were taking no interest at all in his carcase. They evidently could not understand this sudden end, and were aware that something was very wrong.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MYSTERY STAG

MANY years ago the writer, in describing the habits of a certain herd of wild goats, inadvertently gave away their approximate habitat, with the result that the Editor was inundated with applications from a certain class of sportsman for further particulars, as many readers apparently desired to shoot a specimen. Now, as naturally I have no wish for such a fate to overtake the "Mystery Stag," I shall have to be very vague in my statements as to his present whereabouts. For this cunning old gentleman does not live in the inaccessible Highland glens, nor even in the well-wooded combes of Exmoor. He was born in a certain English forest (*now* we have it, our friends may exclaim; but not so fast—there are, I believe, still officially sixty-three forests or chases in Great Britain, and, apart from Scotland, several of these still hold deer in small numbers). In this particular forest deer are scarce, and I believe, officially, do not exist at all. At any rate, so few are their numbers that the official view is not in the present instance at great variance with the facts!

Before the Great War there were, it is true, vague rumours as to the existence of a big stag; but it was during the War he came into local prominence. While the professional poacher and the gamekeeper were at the War, and the huntsman (an older and less active man than in normal times, and short of hounds and horses) hunted seldom and over a much restricted area, the great stag was seldom disturbed, so that he grew bolder and was occasionally seen at dawn or dusk in orchard or paddock in the immediate haunts of man. At any rate, his existence was proved, on the principle of seeing is believing. But *après la guerre* he became again the "Mystery Stag." Time and again were hounds thrown into his former haunts, but never was he roused. Still his great slot, or an infrequent view by some early inhabitant, proved he still survived. The meets of the local pack were changed. It was thought that the trotting of a cavalcade of horsemen on the hard road (very hard in these days!) gave him the office, and that he stole away long before the pack reached his lair. But even this change of tactics did not defeat him; the result was invariably a blank draw!

So two more seasons passed, and belief in his existence almost died. He

had probably fallen to the gun of some allotment-holder, whose small crops he had perhaps too frequently punished : not a likely fate, it is true, as he was far too cunning to go often to the same spot. Still, no cervine palate can resist apples or corn occasionally, and possibly the pitcher had gone too often to the well ! In any case, he disappeared.

But with the advent of the "rut" he has appeared again, and far from his former haunts. It is, perhaps, impossible, or guesswork at best, to attempt to follow the mental processes of any animal, but apparently, with the advent of chill October, he has cast some of his caution to the winds and has taken greater risks than ever at the behest of the little blind god ; and I think his latest feat is not the least remarkable of the many performed by the Mystery Stag. First of all, his haunt, as far as it is known, is a big wood, well watered, bounded on four sides by much-frequented roads, across one of which lies what is technically called "the Forest," although, like many other so-called forests, it contains but few trees. At two ends of his home cover lie fair-sized villages ; two great cities lie within a twenty-mile radius ; the whole country is bisected by roads, along which rattles a ceaseless stream of mechanical and other vehicles. It is not a country of great estates, although well wooded ; indeed, most of it is cut up with market gardens, small farms, cottages, wire fences, and so forth. Far from an ideal home from a red deer's point of view ! But how the red deer got there is obvious : they are the last harried remnant of a herd as old as England. How they still exist, a pitiful remnant though they be, is a mystery. Why they should choose this portion of the country is another : my only suggestion being that, although there is a fair-sized stretch of uninhabited country to the south (the last remnant of the vast original home of this herd), that country is much disturbed by noisy trippers during the summer, and much hunted by several packs of hounds (whose boundaries there meet) during the winter. The bit inhabited by the Mystery Stag, although full of people, is only disturbed in the sense that many people are there at work. No noisy tourists frequent this somewhat ugly country, and there is not enough game for it to be often shot over, while it is too much wired up to attract the local Hunt frequently. But if there be few legitimate enemies, there must be many others. However, he has temporarily left his old haunts and appeared in an equally thickly inhabited country many, many miles away. How and why he went there interests me, and no one can do more than suggest his possible reasons. With the advent of October he must have set off in search of a wife, or rather wives, for a great stag invariably collects a large harem if he can. Naturally, he went south (I presume) ; in the stillness of the night his guttural notes would be heard at long intervals (for deer call but seldom in country where there are many people about). Probably no answering challenge came to his call. Possibly the few wild male deer, recognising by his lusty voice that

here was something beyond their strength, wisely kept themselves out of his way. Probably he picked up a hind or two. But, easily won, little valued; and driving his new household before him, he wandered on for several nights, unsatisfied, his restless mood driving him ever further afield until, abandoning, apparently, his new wives, he set forth across the thickly inhabited vale in quest of others. Despite barbed-wire fences, villages, and much-frequented roads, he must have made his cautious way from big wood to little spinney, up many a rough hedgerow, his presence unsuspected and unseen by the teeming life of the valley, until at last in the grey dawn he reached the edge of the chalk downs. In some hazel copse on their steep sides he must have lain all day long, with the strange smell of sheep and the jangle of their bells in his ears; probably many children "nutting" must have passed his lair, his strange and unpleasant smell conveying nothing to their urban nostrils.

As the shadows fall and the golden autumnal moon comes up, and silence once more reigns, the great beast rises to his legs and, after stretching his limbs, lays back his splendid antlers and sends a guttural melancholy roar rolling over the downs. Slowly wandering forth, he moves his heavy bulk silently from copse to copse along the west of the downs. From their silent heights he more than once looks down on the busy haunts of man far below, with the twinkling lights of village or town, and once, at least, he hears cathedral chimes sounding faint and thin as he pursues his midnight quest. Dawn finds him many miles from home in another hazel copse. Want of drink must have been his trouble these last few days, for water is scarce on these sheep-cropped hillsides. Still, his marvellous nose has probably detected the presence of one of the few dew ponds. The close of another day draws nigh, and to his restless ears comes a faint and menacing sound. Starting to his feet, he answers that distant voice, and, forgetful of human foes, he trots off, stopping frequently to hurl back his challenges to that insulting cry. Down into the vale, past a sleepy farmyard, he hurries; across several enclosed fields until he comes to the high palisade of a little park. He is nearing his foe now; indeed, a loud, raucous challenge proclaims his proximity. Out from the black shadows of an oak stalks another great stag. Their antlers meet with a crash through the palisading; the old fence rocks to the impact, but something in the stranger's appearance is too much for the park stag, and he slowly withdraws further into his enclosure, roaring sullenly. Not so the Mystery Stag. He has not come these weary miles to be baulked of love or war. Round the park palings he stalks, seeking an entry. No flaw can he find in the old fence, but high ground in one spot suggests a good take-off, and with a mighty bound he enters the enclosure. Once inside, he immediately advances on the park stag, who, conscious that the eyes of the ladies of his household are already directed on the handsome stranger, awaits his approach, grunting sullenly. With the bristles of their

great necks and back standing erect, they advance slowly towards each other ; down go the great heads with a mighty clash of antlers. For a moment or so they strive to force each other back, but good living, weight, and courage are with the wild animal. Possibly the stale ground of park land, though aided with winter hay, has not given stamina to the tame animal ; though it must be admitted that usually the park-bred animals have the finer antlers, the size of which, after all, is but the fruit of good living. Still, the fact remains in this case the wild is an easy winner. Very soon the park stag gives ground and, getting a nasty hook in the ribs, retires hastily. The muckle beast, giving him a parting prod, then quietly takes command of the harem, which obediently retire under the oaks with their new lord. The owner of the estate, on his return the following evening, was astonished to see close to the garden fence his noble stag and his squire, with woebegone appearance, eating garden refuse ; while in the centre of the park, against the sunset sky, stood a lordly stranger, roaring defiance at all the world, with around him the tame hinds. It was the famous Mystery Stag, and there I also beheld him only yesterday.

CHAPTER XIV

MYSTERIOUS STRANGERS

DEER turn up in most unexpected places—this is a densely populated island and the waste spaces are singularly few. Yet odd members of the cervine race turn up in localities where it is most difficult to account for their presence. Red deer have been seen at various times in Glamorganshire, for example, and there are “tales” of deer swimming across from Exmoor (fourteen miles). It has also been suggested that the Glamorganshire deer are animals captured at sea by coasting vessels and abandoned again near the Welsh coast on account of the difficulty of explaining their presence aboard when going into port. Of course, deer have often been stolen at sea, to the disgust of their pursuers, but it seems a most unlikely way of accounting for their presence in Wales.¹

I was told on reliable authority that a stag and two hinds were recently seen near Grately Junction (Salisbury Plain); these could possibly have come (through a thickly populated country) from the New Forest. In any case, they vanished as mysteriously as they came, and I strongly suspect came to a bad end.

Just after the War a strange stag appeared in Eastnor Park. The owner had just previously bought a couple of stags to improve his herd, and the presence of the stranger was first noticed by the fact that he was violently assaulting (and looked like killing) the dehorned new arrivals. He was promptly shot. The query is: where did he come from? There is no other deer park for an immense distance, and the most plausible solution is that he had escaped from the Park as a calf and had lived on the Malverns and surrounding hills. How he escaped in such a thickly populated country is a marvel—probably he had become so cunning that his presence was never suspected, and he never would have revealed himself had he not, pricked by the darts of Cupid, re-scaled the Park walls in the autumn to reach the hinds. There is another solution possible. Many years ago a Mr. Greswolde Williams hunted carted deer for a short time in this neighbourhood, and after he gave

¹ Pliny credits stags with swimming thirty leagues! Seton Gordon mentions deer swimming from Murren to Mull (three miles), and from Searla to Jura across the Gulf of Corrievreckan.



"A GUTTURAL MELANCHOLY ROAR" (The Mystery Stag)

up there were said to be still an outlier or two about. I remember seeing one myself.

Anyone who has hunted with foxhounds over different parts of England must have been struck by the number of different places where he has seen deer in front of hounds. These are presumably escaped park animals, yet it would be interesting to know how many of them have been bred outside parks—quite a few, I expect. Since writing the chapter called “The Lost Herd” I have traced, I think, a more probable origin of these deer. Some years ago the Master of a private staghound pack, which hunted carted deer, got tired of this pursuit and asked permission of a landowner, who possessed some extra large covers, to turn down red and fallow deer, to form the nucleus of a herd to hunt. The permission was granted and a few deer turned down. But these were never hunted. Times changed quickly, the estate was sold, and the staghounds given up, and the deer (except the red), in spite of strenuous poaching, not only survive, but do so in a far more densely populated district than their predecessors started life in many years ago.

As an example of curious spots in which deer turn up, last year a Japanese stag was reported in Braemar and another at Alvie (possibly the same?). A few years ago—so Mr. Fred Goss, late harbourer of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds told me—a roebuck was shot near Dulverton, North Devon. This was the first and last reported on Exmoor, I believe, since Norman kings hunted Exmoor. In those days, according to Rawle’s *Annals of Exmoor*, it was a royal forest of 80,000 acres, in which roebuck as well as red deer flourished. A Japanese deer was killed by the Beenham Court Harriers on Salisbury Plain in the Tedworth country last year. Red deer have been seen at intervals in the Wye Valley, and I believe also in Clun Forest in recent times.

I know a deer park in Hampshire where almost every year a wild red stag turns up and fights (always successfully) with the tame stags for the hinds (a 12-pointer did so this year, 1925); and in another park, within five miles, where only fallow deer were kept (I believe no longer), an old wild buck quite frequently would come all the way from the New Forest. On more than one occasion when hunted fallow deer have been known to run from the New Forest to mix with the tame herds, and on this fact I based my chapter called “Sanctuary.”

A few years ago, as I understand from Lord Hastings, a 17-pointer turned up in Melton Constable Park in October. After reigning a short time he was deposed and slain by the other stags. Apparently he had come from Lord Suffield’s park at Gunton.

CHAPTER XV

HIND-HUNTING ON EXMOOR

HARD frost in the Midlands, the barometer set fair, and every indication of an indefinite continuance of hard weather. How often is the hunting man confronted with similar conditions! What is to be done? At home, hunting from one's own door, it is a matter of no great moment—everyday affairs can be attended to; but to the unfortunate whose leave is limited or who has taken a "box" for the season, or, still worse, is stopping with his horses at the sign of the Hand in Pocket, it is a most momentous question. No use keeping horses to eat their heads off; they cost as much idle as working. I wonder if the frost is universal, he ponders; what about the West Country, with the Cornish Riviera express to get there? A telegram worded: "Hard frost here, what about Exmoor?" elicits the reply: "All right, hunting here." So now it is merely a question of ordering a horse-box and packing one's kit. It has always struck me as rather curious how few people, most of whom could well afford it, ever solve the problem in this way. I can only presume the explanation to be that there is always a chance of the frost breaking before to-morrow morning! Anyway, for my own part, such an eventuality usually finds me a couple of days later in the West Country and on the way to the meet. Our route lies through Horner, as beautiful in winter as at all times, but very different from summer; no perspiring couples with sticky hands are helping each other up "the steepway"; the green "ball" is untenanted, save for a few horned sheep. Gone are the thousand spectators of the opening meet. Gone the sandwich papers and broken glass (or most of it). Nothing is left to indicate the presence of a hundred horse. Even at Cloutsham Farm there is nothing to suggest the existence of the madding crowd, except an estate notice to picnic parties, and another on the farm gate saying "Hunt Staff Only." The parish road is bare save for its golden carpet of beech leaves, and as one emerges on to Stoke Ridge a thick bank of fog comes down, obliterating that wondrous view over the moor and across the Channel to Wales.

To be quite truthful, fogs are not unknown on the moor, and I have known two out of three meets to produce no sport owing to this cause. Indeed,

HIND-HUNTING: A FRESH FIND

From a Drawing by Lionel Edwards



I imagine it would be quite possible to get "out of the frying pan into the fire" by leaving frost in the North only to find fog in the West! In fact, at times the fog hangs for days, nay, even weeks, on the hilltops, making sport impossible. However, we must hurry on, although one can only see a few yards beyond one's horse's ears—the net result of which is that we miss the lane down past the Quarne Harrier Kennels and reach Exford by a more circuitous route. An enquiry as to whether hounds have gone on elicits the reply that "They be at Withypool by this time!" We are late indeed! However, we jog on; the road seems interminable in a fog, but eventually we come up with hounds, to find that, although we are very late, there is evidently no hurry at all, as it is as thick here as anywhere. No hunting for a while. However, after an hour's wait, shivering on the lee side of a beech hedge, the weather shows distinct signs of lifting. Evidently there is a scent to-day: hounds are very much on their toes, lashing their sides with their sterns, heads up to catch the tainted wind—a great contrast to the horses, which, with backs up, tails tucked in, and staring coats, look the picture of misery.

A distinct breeze is getting up. The fog clouds begin to drift, the hilltops to clear, leaving odd, detached wisps of cloud hanging in the combes; a chill and wintry sun comes out and with it all is animation. The pack are now hurried down and across the combe, and from the excited comments of a group of farmers I gather they are going to be laid on to a herd of deer, which to me are invisible on the opposite side. However, the deer have seen them coming, and I spot them for the first time as they go bobbing and lurching over the brown heather with the peculiar ungainly action of the deer family. Quite a big herd, some twenty hinds and two stags—the lord of the harem and a hanger-on, evidently. The hounds have caught a view also, and already are strung out in pursuit, while the two Hunt servants gallop to their work. It behoves us to "get a move on" also. So down we go, clatter and splash through the ford at the bottom, and then gallop up the steep track on the far side and up on to the steep shoulder of the moor. Before we are half-way up my horse begins to blow, yet the grass-fed cobs of the farmers gallop on undistressed. I arrive at the top at last, and a bad last at that, to see the field galloping like blazes to my right, apparently in the track of the herd, while far below on my left I see the pack running towards me, the Hunt servants in pursuit. Ah! now I see: here comes his lordship, the big stag. Evidently they are on the wrong animal. Yes, sure enough, the Whip is riding to cut off the leading hounds; I can hear the faint reports of his whip-thong even from here. Soon he has them stopped, and seeing the huntsman trotting off down another combe, I follow. No use going on without hounds, and anyway the Field are long out of sight by now. In the bottom of the combe hounds can just own a faint line. "Hike (huic)

ee thar! Hike, that's it!" First one hound, then another begins to own the line, and then, with a short-lived burst of melody, away they go. Now we must gallop on the top. Through the deep heather we fairly race. There is something peculiarly exhilarating in the swish of the heather against one's horse's legs. The going is good and sound also, and even the old horse enjoys the novelty, though doubtless *he* would prefer good, short, sound turf. However, all good things (and bad) come to an end; evidently the huntsman's keen eyes have spotted something we have not seen, for crack go the whips; hounds are again stopped and back we go. Suddenly from out of nowhere appear the Field, one of them signalling with a white handkerchief (sure sign of a "view" in the West Country). Away goes the huntsman, hounds at his heels. They are laid on, and away we go once more for a mile or so; then hounds suddenly change direction—down we drop into some enclosed land, and out of a boggy ditch up jumps a stag! We have evidently changed again. Another full stop, followed by a long consultation. These deliberate consultations so often carried on by the executive always strike the newcomer (particularly the fox-hunter) as one of the most unaccountable features of West Country stag-hunting. Yet in hind-hunting they are not quite so numerous as in stag-hunting, the long business of "tufting" being dispensed with in the winter sport, there being no necessity for the ladies to be "of a certain age" (i.e. warrantable deer). The herds have long ago attained proportions where killing is a necessity, and the good old stag-hunting custom of ample law being given to the hunted animal has also consequently become more or less a dead letter.

As a result of the "powwow," we then trot off to draw a small plantation of wind-swept larches, out of which promptly jump a hind and brocket (young male deer). Hounds race them in view down through Zeal Brake to the Danesbrook, where fortunately they divide, the stag going "up away over," while the hind gallops "doon the watter." We pursue as best we may, the going not of the best, being along narrow sheep tracks "with a drop into nothen beneath yer." Arrived at the junction of the Barle, trouble begins again; the hind has got among fresh deer and the Field split up in every direction, as apparently do the hounds also. I pull up, and in a moment all is quiet; the last horseman has vanished. The roar of the water drowns all other sound, and nothing remains save the wild whirling flight of the disturbed pigeons above the woods to show that the hunt is up. I debate, being some twelve miles from home and wintry days being short, whether "Home, John," is not the best course. Anyway, sandwiches are clearly indicated at this period of the chase, and while munching these I perceive two hinds and a calf come along the ridge above the woods which lie beyond the river. "That last hind gallops a bit stiff," I think, and wonder if she is our quarry. A ringing view-holloa from somewhere above me shows that



"THE WRONG ANIMAL" (Hind-hunting)



"THE END IN THE BARLE" (Hind-hunting)

some hidden watcher believes she is. In response to the holloa I hear the faint notes of the horn above the rush of water. We remount and canter up the stony path, and come on a group of farmers watching the distant hind through glasses. Suddenly on the green meadow below on the other side appear the huntsman and pack. Waving arms signal "up the water," and we see him lift his pack right on in response. Now we gallop, and far ahead of us we hear holloa after holloa, and as we come round the bend of the river the Whip's whistle is also heard far above us. Splash through the river goes the huntsman girth deep, the hounds swimming across; down go their heads, and away they go up into the opposite wood. What melody!

The going is rough here; meadows fenced with unjumpable banks, gates to be wrestled with, and rocks and bushes that delay us. Rounding the next bend we hear the momentary clamour of "the bay," then silence. A hind, although she kicks shrewdly, cannot hold the pack at bay like her antlered lord. We arrive to see the hounds struggling in the water and the Whip and a farmer waist deep in the flood, administering the *coup de grâce*.

CHAPTER XVI

CHANGING EXMOOR

EXMOOR, or Exmore as the name was once spelt, was originally one of sixty-seven royal forests. A forest had in its old and legal meaning nothing to do with trees, but was simply a district reserved to the king in which certain beats were protected by forest laws. In 1617 there is mention of only one tree (Kite Oak) on the whole of Exmoor! In 1814 there are thirty-seven trees. After the Civil War the Commons of England, having murdered the King, etc., decided to sell the Crown lands. Exmoor Chase, commonly called the Forest of Exmoor, etc., was sold in 1653 to Mr. James Buevey of London, merchant, the first owner other than a king or queen. However, on the Restoration he was requested to show by what title he held Exmoor Forest. He apparently lost his case, and it must have gone back to the Crown, being thereafter leased only to various tenants until it was disafforested in May 1819. Exmoor then finally passed away from the Crown to various private owners, and although still spoken of as "the Forest," it has thus lost all legal title to such a description (MacDermot's *History of the Forest of Exmoor*).

But now the moor, long inviolate, is becoming Changing Exmoor, and one sometimes feels that stag-hunting is losing the wildness peculiarly essential to this form of the chase. This is no fault of the deer, but of their environment. The country is becoming too enclosed, too thickly inhabited—in fact, too popular! Although wire, that serious menace in most hunts, does not exist in the ordinary sense of the word, a form of it is going to exist on Exmoor and in a sense already does so now. The increase in smaller ownership has led to a greatly increased number of deer damage claims. To lessen these vast claims (and it is rather ironical, but none the less true, that the most frequent claims are often made from the country least populated by the deer, which rather gives away the inhabitants of those districts, I am afraid) the Hunt has for some years been giving tenant farmers deer netting to place on the top of the banks, in order to keep cervine thieves out of their crops. Naturally, supplying netting is less expensive than paying claims, but personally I think that eventually this will recoil on the Hunt, for as year after year more and more farm land is enclosed on the moor and its environs,

so more and more circumscribed does the land hunted over become. This situation at present cuts both ways: The fact that the cliff farms, the Porlock Vale, etc., are now practically wired in has largely prevented deer going to sea (very few do so now, as compared with twenty years ago), and it has also to a large extent stopped deer going to the cliffs. The latter were most unpleasant and dangerous riding, and I think that probably in consequence more moorland runs are enjoyed, which is all to the good. But I notice deer do not now run over much country which even I can remember they used to cross, and I believe that the increase in wire has more to do with that fact than either the increased population or motor traffic. I may be entirely wrong—in fact, I hope I am—but I have a feeling that West Country stag-hunting is for this reason more artificial than it was, and that this idea has occurred to others also is proved by the casual remark of a total stranger (I think an American) to me. He remarked, "Say, if they put up much more of this wire, the deer will soon be like canary birds in a cage!"

The development of the motor industry not only will alter but already has altered the land, and consequently the chase of the red deer. Indirectly it has led to a great increase in building on the environs of the moor. Exmoor remained uncultivated for many centuries, and it still defies agricultural improvement, for although nibbling goes on it seems to defeat the farmer. The jerry builder, however, is not so easily routed!

Furthermore, the motor has made it possible for thousands more people to visit Exmoor, and I am not sure that most persuasive of romancers, R. D. Blackmore, is not responsible for most of them. *Lorna Doone* is a wonderful romance (and the fact that description and reality tally not at all doesn't lessen the wonder!), but it is helping to spoil Exmoor! The Doone Valley, Brendon, Malmsmead, etc., in August are becoming like Epsom Downs on Derby Day. Any day when "the hunt is up" the crest of the hills—Countisbury to Hawkcombe Head—are a mass of motor vehicles, and huge and gaudy charabancs line the road: that they do not always turn a deer (as they would a fox) scarcely makes them really more pleasing to sportsmen.

It is not the direct harm the motor has done, but the indirect which matters. For example, bearing in mind the axiom of carted stag-hunting that "a deer must not be hunted as you hunt a fox," consider the main Exeter road—roughly Dulverton to Wheddon Cross, let us say. A ceaseless swarm of cars whirl along this road in summer; no hunted deer, though he may have successfully baffled huntsman and hounds, can soil in the Exe without being seen by some of them. Once spotted, his chance is nil. The cars easily keep pace with him as he splashes down to the accompaniment of ceaseless holloas. You cannot blame the motorists for being keen, or the huntsman for taking advantage of the holloas. It is the latter's business to

kill deer, and he can scarcely be expected to disregard opportunities which are hurled at his head! A stag, owing to his large size, can under these conditions scarcely emulate Whyte-Melville's fortunate fox, who "slipped quietly away, by good fortune only seen by a countryman with a quinsy, who couldn't holloa to save his life"!

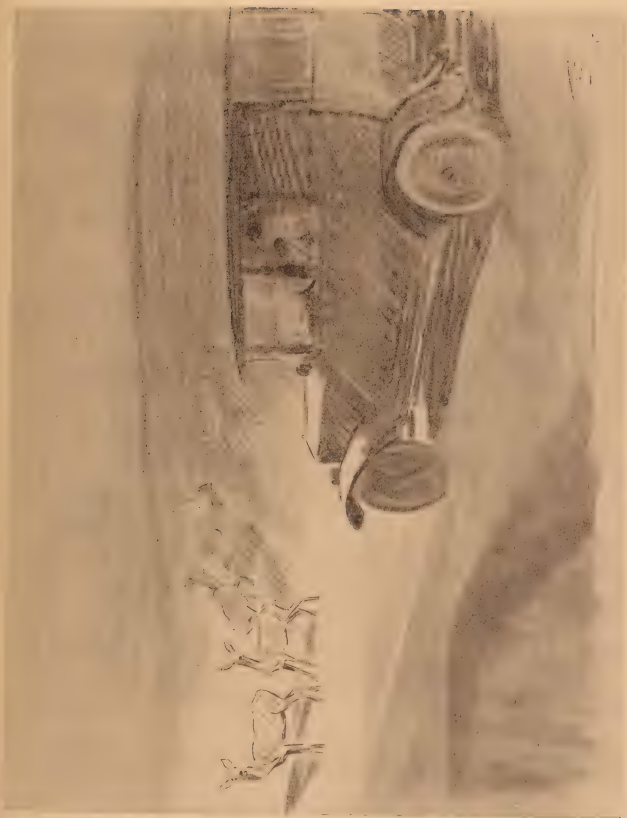
The motor menace is more than indirect, however, near London, judging by this paragraph, which appeared in the *Daily Mail* of October 12th, 1926.

"Motor-cars are becoming an increasing menace to the deer of Epping Forest. Most of the accidents occur at night-time, when the headlights of the cars dazzle the deer as they are crossing the road. During the last ten years the herd in Epping Forest has diminished in number from 500 to about 100.

"Three young deer were killed by a motor-car yesterday as they were crossing the Epping New Road."

Again, road improvements are taking place on the Simonsbath road. Up to the present the moor has been uncut by main arteries of road or rail; the principal thoroughfares have merely skirted the moor.

In conclusion, let it be remembered that a great but silent revolution is still going on in rural England which eventually must affect the deer as it must all forms of sport. Taxation and death duties continue to break up the great estates. Exmoor, which has long ceased to be a Crown forest, is already in the hands of many private owners, and as these are successively hit by taxation more and more broken up will it become, and more numerous still will become the owners. Anxious though the new type of landowner seems to be to assume the responsibilities of a class he has already almost entirely supplanted, I am afraid he may not be as good sportsman or as good friend to the deer. But the most serious menace to the deer is one that may also be a menace to the existing order of things and inevitably, much as we may deplore the fact, will alter them. This is the rapid increase in the population of England and Wales, the rate of which is not generally realised.



EXMOOR (ANY EVENING)



"TUFTING" (POUND BOTTOM, NEW FOREST BUCKHOUNDS)

From a Drawing by Lionel Edwards

CHAPTER XVII

BUCK-HUNTING

THE pursuit of the buck is as old as that of the hart, but he was scarcely adjudged an equal. Fallow deer (*Cervus dama*) are placed third among the beasts of venerie in *The Master of Game*, first place being given to the hare. Turberville places the buck second to the stag.

The oldest pack of buckhounds was the now defunct Royal Buckhounds. They are first specifically mentioned as such in Edward III's reign.

Officially they were buckhounds to distinguish them from the Royal Staghounds, north of the Trent. These Royal Hart hounds were nominally amalgamated with the buckhounds in William III's reign, during which period stag-hunting and buck-hunting became synonymous terms, so far as the Royal pack was concerned.

Latterly the Royal hounds were not great sticklers for the ancient terms or laws of venerie. Apparently, like modern packs, they rather generously interpreted the said laws with regard to the length of the hunting season.

But buck-hunting apparently soon died out of fashion in favour of stag-hunting. In "an account of stags, hinds and bucks, killed by his Majesty's hounds since his Majesty's accession to the 13th of October 1730," we find 131 stags, 22 hinds, and only 4 bucks.

As time goes on we find the red deer only is hunted, and more and more often "His Royal Highness was pleased to command the Stag to be spared": thus began the chase of carted deer.

At the present time, although there are probably far more wild fallow in England than red deer, there is only one pack officially hunting buck. This is the New Forest Buckhounds, kennelled at Brockenhurst, Hants. There is some affinity between the two packs, as in 1836 the Royal hounds, with their famous huntsman, Charles Davis, came down to hunt red deer in the Forest, those which they took being sent back to replenish the paddocks (Swinley) at Ascot. Their last visit to the Forest was in 1852 after the Deer Removal Act had been passed, and they again took what they required for stock back with them.

This official "jihad" against the deer was the beginning of modern New

Forest hunting. To quote *Thirty-five Years in the New Forest* (Lascelles): "Quite a competition sprang up . . . 'to assist the Crown' by removing deer with the aid of various packs." So great indeed was this competition, and so manifold the disputing and quarrelling among them about prior rights, that the Crown had to take a firm stand and eventually narrowed down permission to one pack hunting under the authority of Mr. Morant and of Mr. Lovell.

In 1883 an established pack of buckhounds was formed, Mr. Lovell carrying the horn himself. Mr. Lovell, according to his portrait, was an extraordinarily good-looking man, who usually hunted stag in a top hat. When the strain of long days became too much for him he engaged Robert Allen as huntsman. The latter's recommendation was one such as few could hope to emulate, for his late master (Sir George Brooke) described him as "always keen, never hot, never cold, never tired, never hungry, and never thirsty!" In 1893 Mr. Lovell gave up, being succeeded by Mr. Walker. In 1894 Mr. Kelly became joint, and in 1896 sole Master.

Allen gave up his place owing to failing health in 1897 and was succeeded by Harry White, whose claim to fame was the beautiful condition in which he turned his hounds out, in spite of bad kennels and other difficulties. In 1902 Mr. O. T. Price became Master, to be followed in 1908 by Mr. George Thursby and Captain Timson. Sir George remains Master to this day, having shown remarkable and consistent sport over a long period.

The New Forest presumably always held fallow deer, although the Conqueror is specifically mentioned as "loving the 'tall' deer as if he had been their father." The "tall" obviously means *Cervus elaphus*, not *Cervus dama*; but Mr. Lascelles tells us the red never really thrived in the Forest, and during the last 200 years never increased beyond seventy or eighty head, although practically nothing was done to keep down their numbers. To-day I should doubt there being even half that number.

In 1670 Charles II apparently introduced some fresh blood; witness the enclosing of land adjoining New Park for "the preservation of our red deer newly come from France." During the eighteenth century the Forest became overstocked, and in 1787 three hundred deer died during the winter in Bolderwood.

It was stated about the time of the Deer Removal Act that there were but two thousand deer in the Forest, and that they were not completely wiped out is due to the fact that public opinion was too strong for the law. Surrounding landowners were more hospitable to the deer than the minions of the Crown, and when the latter had spent all the money allotted to destruction the survivors of the deer filtered back to the Forest.

That pitiful remnant is, I understand, not too popular with the Crown officials at the present time.



NEW FOREST BUCKHOUNDS (1888)

Capt. Lovell (*Master*).

George Allen (*Huntman*).

I have had to draw somewhat heavily on Mr. Lascelles' book, as there seems to be no other giving any reliable authentic history of New Forest hunting. It may not be without interest to recall that I well remember being startled by the sombre bay of a bloodhound whilst riding up a quiet Forest glade. Shortly after I was passed by this hound, who was followed by a solitary huntsman, a huge man on a somewhat diminutive but very well-bred pony, who carried a rifle in his hand and wore a cartridge belt round his shoulder and a deer-stalker cap on his head. Mr. Lascelles was then engaged in keeping down the deer himself (he was more than a goodish shot), and I think, at the time I saw him, he had given up both bloodhounds and southern hounds in favour of Kerry beagles (22 inches to 24 inches high and not the least like a beagle!). I have myself hunted with these black-and-tan hounds. They are fast and keen, and, unlike modern staghounds, throw their tongues with a cry which you can hear for miles. Mr. Reid, a farmer of New Court, Downton, has still a few couple which hunt deer most beautifully. Lately I noticed that a fine pack of these rare hounds was sold and split up—a thousand pities! The unentered ones went to foxhounds. But what an opportunity to get good staghounds thrown away!

As regards the actual hunting, the difference between stag- and buck-hunting in these days is, at any rate on the surface, not very great. In the New Forest the harbouring is done by the Crown Keepers. Tufting is the same as on Exmoor, with the exception that the main body of the pack is kept in leash held by Crown Keepers (harling it was called on Exmoor in the old days), instead of being kennelled in convenient buildings as in the West Country. The chief difference appears to be that bucks are hunted all through the year, instead of does taking the place of bucks after "the rut," as hinds take the place of stags in the West.

According to the Forest Laws, the buck-hunting season was from the Nativity of St. John (June 24th) to Holyrood Day (September 14th); whilst the does should be hunted from the above date to Candlemas (February 2nd).

Not unnaturally the larder played a more important part in old-time sport than it does now. According to Shirley, in *English Deer Parks*, "the time of the fallow buck season, grease time," when deer were at their best, and "in pride of grease," was between August 1st and September 6th.

Fallow deer do not as a rule give such good points as red, but they are in some ways quite as difficult to hunt. For example, Turberville says: "The greatest subtility that a huntsman hath need to beware of in huntynge the Bucke is to keep his hounds from hunting counter or change because we have plentie of Fallow deare and they come oftener directly backe upon the houndes than a redde deer doth." In fact, they are beggars to double and squat down! I once, when fox-hunting, galloped literally over a buck, who never moved. They utilise the cervine trick of running to herd freely, and I once

saw a buck run to a flock of sheep, and gallop to and fro among them to foil his line before going on. Hounds could make nothing of it, but unfortunately for the buck he forgot the Field could quite well see him far below, as they came off the top of the Downs, and his trick was of no avail. All the same, he beat us in the end by running "to herd."

The following notes of runs may give some idea of modern buck-hunting :—

April 1923. The buck jumped out of a bush in the open at the corner of Bentley Wood. The pack ran fast via Holly Hatch, Sloden, Sluifers, Bentley Wood, Oakley, Roe Wood, Picket Post, High Town, and thence alongside the railway to Holmersly, being set up and taken at the edge of Sway village. 12 mile point and 26 miles as hounds ran. Time 3 hours.

January 1925. Found in Aldridge Hill, ran via Hinchelsea, New Park, Hurst Hill, Warwick Slade, Puckpits, Oeknell Arch, Sluifers, Holly Hatch, Hasley, Latchmere, Hampton Ridge, and the pack finally ran up to him in the garden of the Foresters' Inn, Frogham, $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Point 10 miles and very much further as hounds ran.

April 1925. Ran from Mark Ash, via Sluifers, Broomy, and Hasley, and stopped the pack outside Loosehanger. 9 mile point.

March 1924. Found a buck in Hinchelsea gorse with two couple of tufters, and a great hunt followed. The little pack ran him right across the forest nearly straight and were never touched, and pulled him down in the stream at Moyles Court. 10 mile point. Time 1 hour 20 minutes. A good performance for only four hounds!

CHAPTER XVIII

SANCTUARY

(THE LIFE STORY OF A FALLOW DEER)

THE animal story does not usually commend itself to sportsmen, anything in the nature of the life history of a beast, especially a wild beast, being looked on with not unjustifiable suspicion, owing to so many books having been written the animal heroes in which are made to think and feel like human beings. Yet it must be admitted that though we cannot either know their thoughts or feelings, yet the instincts of the wild do often simulate very closely the operation of reason. Personally, I am of opinion that habit and memory are the two most powerful factors in animal life, and therefore it is at least possible I may here be writing the true history of a particular deer based on his actions when pursued.

In a certain county—which shall be nameless, although there are several where it may, and in this case does, happen—it is the habit of the wild deer (both red and fallow) to visit the tame females in certain deer parks every autumn. The high deer fences which serve (with rare exceptions) to keep the tame deer in do not apparently keep the wild out, and thereby hangs this tale. In this park of no great dimensions a small herd of fallow deer was ruled over by an anæmic-looking white buck whose better-looking rivals had been converted into venison (and there, although aged, he still rules more through peculiarity of colour than by virtue!). Some few years ago in the month of falling leaves there arrived over the park fence a fierce and active rival, who utterly defeated his white lordship and took possession of his harem. Yet, although so formidable and fierce, the wild deer could not accustom himself to the near presence of his deadly enemy, Man, and from the moment the first human being entered the park (incidentally, the postman) was overcome with fear. The wild deer spent hours seeking restlessly an exit, until he found a dip in the ground and fence which gave him the desired opportunity to escape. And although, subsequently, he several times returned, never again did he remain after the first streak of dawn. During November, when the last leaves had fluttered down, Jack Frost with icy hands hard gripped the land around the park. The roads were dry as bones, the plough land as granite ridges. The deer grass grew brittle and dry, the laurels nipped,

the pond frozen. At night a clear and frosty moon shone from a steel-blue sky, and the huddled park deer watched with envy the wild buck outside the fence eating those roots not yet in clump. One doe, more enterprising than the rest, spent hours looking for an exit, and by mere chance found one. It so happened that when shooting cock pheasants the owner had downed one just over the park palings; a fat and lethargic beater had climbed over rather than go round, and two rotten uprights had given way. The doe found this weak spot and, squeezing through, joined her former and temporary husband in the roots. But just about dawn the buck moved off and she followed. He was an unsatisfactory partner and ever restless. On gaining the shelter of the big woods she lost sight of him, through stopping for a moment to feed in one of the rides, and incidentally never saw him again. Long before night, not being accustomed to the ways of the wild, she had moved out to feed. Astonished cattle saw her emerge in broad daylight into the water meadows. Dark found her doing herself right well in the village allotments, but morning brought the first disillusion. An early riser, seeing her from his cottage window, loaded his gun and went in pursuit. By pure chance she moved off just as he got in range, and the shot, fired at too great a distance, had time to spread, a few pellets only hitting her, so that she bounded away, bleeding freely, but in reality practically unhurt. That unerring instinct for direction inherited by all animals, whether wild or tame, led her straight back to the park, at which she arrived to find new white uprights in the broken palings. Too blown to jump—and, incidentally, it probably never occurred to her to do so—she lay the rest of the day in some branches outside the fence. When darkness fell, being unmolested, she once more wandered into the land of plenty to feed, but, being wary after her previous experience, she never again allowed herself to be seen, and the natural instinct of all the deer asserting itself gradually over her park training, dawn always found her moving off to the safety of the woods in the furtive manner of her kind.

So she became semi-feral. In due course she discovered that here and there at wide intervals were others of her genus—shy, furtive creatures that had a way of vanishing silently from dangers that she neither saw nor heard, though she gradually discovered that certain scents were sufficient warning to them, and once this was understood her life was comparatively safe. Still terror ever lurked, and one moonlight night a danger new, and by her undreamt of, slew one of her companions. Several times she had noticed in a certain narrow ride in a covert that two saplings were bent across it in rather a peculiar way, but, having passed beneath them on several occasions unscathed, she thought no more about it until one silent night the leading deer at this very spot sprang into the air and hung kicking in hideous silence! It was a deer snare! Again, in November nights they discovered a little field of turnips surrounded on three sides by hazel copses, on the fourth a thatched cottage.



" LABOURED ACROSS THE STICKY PLOUGH " (Sanctuary)

Standing, themselves completely hidden, they could watch unseen, and, having satisfied themselves that all was safe, feed to their heart's content. Could they have heard a conversation beneath that roof they would have been even more careful.

"Them deers have been at turnips again, Dad. I've waited on 'em several nights, but never got a shot."

"Best leave 'em alone, lad. 'Sides, they stag-hunters wouldn't like it."

"Oh! drat thim stag-hunters. 'Sides, they only hunts bucks, and these be does! I'll have 'un, see if I doan't!" And so in due course another deer went the way of all flesh.

The winter drew to a close, and spring found her with her faculties more fully developed, but with a new handicap in the shape of a fawn. However, the summer is a quiet season and passed away in comparative security, but only too soon. Her fawn, growing in size and wisdom, was in reality a creature of the wild, and by autumn a very capable person for his size. We will pass over the autumn, which perchance was uneventful, the worst incident being but the invasion of their silent woodlands by an army of beaters, the tapping of whose sticks and the banging of the guns forced the deer to live a very harassed life for an hour or two. But by continually being on the move they only once gave a fleeting glimpse of themselves to the shooters. However, late in the winter, or rather early spring, the staghounds came to visit the outlying country. Shortly after the pack were laid on to a red deer; two hounds divided and ran a doe (our friend and her fawn), going away silent as a dream. Fortunately for the fawn, now pretty big, scent was not too good, and they obtained a long lead. Racing over the heavy plough, our doe made straight for her original home—the park. The fawn, labouring in pursuit, must have inevitably been killed but for the fact that the two hounds had been seen, and the Whip, riding to cut them off, soon stopped them.

But the doe and fawn still galloped on until close to the park. Here, being unpursued, the doe stopped, panting; but the sight of a distant horseman set her going again, and on coming to the park palings, with a mighty "lep," she entered, leaving the fawn outside. Unable to follow, he squatted like a hare in the ditch until night, which he spent in fruitless effort to find a way in. For several days he hung about, but the strange sights and smells of human life were too much for his nerves, and soon he wandered back to the wood in which he first saw light.

Several years passed by. Village rumour had it that an exceptionally big fallow buck had been seen from time to time, but although many a time hounds drew his supposed haunts he was not seen until one day he was accidentally found. Hounds had drawn his usual haunts blank. Being taken on to fresh fields and pastures new, they had again drawn blank. As a last draw late in the day they tried a little cover on the side of the Downs, and

out came our friend, a big fat buck, his white tail arched over his back, and with that curiously jerky, yet mechanical, gait peculiar to deer (more especially fallow deer) he took a line over the open Downs. He had soon fairly to race, for scent was good, and swinging a big circle round, he came into a large covert. Here he ran the woodlands until they got too hot to hold him, and then facing the Downs once more he made as if for the reed beds of the river, that fatal water which has so dreadful an attraction for hunted deer. Being headed before he had gone a mile round he came again into the same wood. In this he found no shelter; it was a screaming scent, and so, getting a bit rattled and not a little blown, he apparently remembered the little park to which his mother had fled on the first occasion on which he had seen hounds. So away he went straight for it, in spite of motors on the road and the inevitable spectators who apparently drop from the clouds when "the hunt is up." Amid a chorus of holloas he laboured across the sticky ploughs, and decreasing his pace as he approached the deer fence, with that peculiar propping canter, he gathered himself and with a mighty bound landed inside the park fence. With heaving flanks and the steam rising in a thin cloud from his nostrils he gazed in safety at the baffled hounds raging outside, and presently, still with his white tail fanned out cockily over his back, he trotted stiffly off to join the astonished huddled little herd of tame deer under the trees. There let us leave him.



"WHAT WAS THAT?"

CHAPTER XIX

THE LOST HERD

CHANGING England is always before us in print these days, and, indeed, the old order changeth with a vengeance. Yet the changing of England is no new cry. We are more acutely conscious of it just now because the War (as did past wars) speeded things up.

In the olden days, when deer and wolf and boar were the beasts of the chase and the fox mere vermin, the popular sporting counties (if one may use such a word when sport was strictly in the hands of the kings and nobles) were what are now Hants, Wilts, and Dorset—not exactly popular hunting countries in these present days when compared with the Midlands! Yet William, “who loved the tall red deer,” and Rufus, and King John found their best sport in the South of England. The counties named are full of old haunts of the deer. Holt Forest, the Forest of Bere, Harewood Forest, St. Leonard’s Forest, John o’ Gaunt’s Deer Forest, the New Forest, Savernake Forest, and Cranbourne Chase are familiar names, but in very few of them are deer to be found in these times, and certainly “the most stateliest beast” is now practically extinct. In the whole of England (excluding Scotland and Ireland) there are only about three wild herds of red deer left. Of fallow deer, however, there are more, but as a beast of the chase the latter is a poor substitute. Yet, on account of his smaller size and greater cunning, he has survived in a good many places where the nobler animal had long been extinct.

It is curious, but none the less a fact, that there seems to be an entire absence of romance about fallow deer. The red deer has a halo, even in these prosaic days. The sportsmen, stalkers, ghillies of the North, the hunting men and farmers, and indeed every villager in the West, take a pride, not only in the stag-hunting, but in the deer themselves. The red deer has always had countless admirers throughout the ages, but there seems to be no corresponding interest in the fallow deer. Even in a country inhabited by them you can obtain little information. No one knows or takes much interest. Even the gamekeepers who should know something about them are usually remarkably ignorant of their habits. More extraordinary still, take any popular work on Natural History. The fallow deer (*Cervus dama*) is dismissed with a few cursory sentences, containing little information except,

perhaps, as to its distribution. Various queries occur to anyone who does take an interest, but the answers are difficult to obtain. Fallow deer are coloured white, fawn, chestnut-brown to nearly black, but the majority of them are dark brown in winter and have spotted chestnut coats in summer. Some, the black variety, known as "the old forest breed," retain their ebony hue throughout the year. The fawns of this breed are black. In certain lights only do the spots show distinctly, but they are there, nevertheless, for the young of all deer are born spotted. Again, one sometimes sees a spotted deer, usually not an adult, among a dark herd in winter. Another thing I have noticed with the local deer—the sexes congregate together more or less throughout the year, unlike red deer, where the stags live separate from the hinds except in the autumn. With fallow deer I have seen bucks with does almost throughout the year, except in the spring, when bucks shed their antlers and does bring forth their young.

One such wild herd I know well—as well, that is, as it is possible to know these cunning beasts. It is a survival of a herd dating from "the Conqueror," of truly aristocratic Norman blood—the old dark-coloured forest deer of England. (Fallow deer are said not to be indigenous, but to have been imported by the Romans.) It is, nevertheless, a lost herd, having strayed (within the memory of the oldest inhabitant) from a district some twenty miles away, where some of the original herd still survive, though leading, I imagine, a somewhat harried life, not only as a result of the great influx of summer visitors, but on account of the jerry builder.

The disappearance of roads is very marked in some districts. For example, the county map shows a Roman road direct between the cathedral cities—in actual fact, the road is first lost at the river. The old ford is gone—anyway, it is no longer a ford. The bridge that took its place is a mile or more upstream. Picking it up again on the other side, the road eventually peters out in ploughed fields, but can be found again after a detour of a mile or so, only to die away once more further on. Again, at a spot called London Cottages several tracks and a road converge on a main artery. Originally this was where passengers from outlying districts picked up the London mail-coach. When the last coach was taken off, their use faded away, and now the tracks have nearly disappeared and the road is grown over and unused save by the deer, as its *raison d'être* no longer exists.

There is another change which may have not a little to do with the increase of deer in this particular district. Cheaper facilities of travel and greater variety of amusement in village life have undoubtedly reduced the number of those who poached for want of something better to do. Professional poachers being in these days a declining number, the enemies of the deer are therefore now chiefly smallholders of the market-garden type and those farmers whose land adjoins coverts.

The countryside has changed greatly in the last few years, and it is not without interest to note that the substitution of motor for horse transport has tended to crowd the main arteries and depopulate the country lanes. Consequently, the district I am writing of lies more quiet than in pre-motor days. Many of the side roads are falling, or have already fallen, into disuse, as a short cut is not so important to the motorist as to the horseman. The country inhabited by this herd has been well described as one of large woodlands and small holdings. The inhabitants of the latter, I fancy, thin the herd not a little; but the absence at the War of the more active male population of the countryside was probably a great help to the herd. At all events, its numbers increased greatly during that period.

Clever animals are fallow deer. Wire fences, of which the southern parts of England are only too full, bother them not at all. I have seen them slip under the bottom strand, and even between the top and second strands—which sounds an impossible feat for an antlered buck. Of course, they make mistakes at times, like other people—usually over a new fence with the height and practicability of which they have had no previous acquaintance. I saw one fall over such a fence in front of foxhounds. Another, hustled by a collie dog, made a bad shot and chested a new fence, from which he bounced back like a ball. He made no mistake at the second effort, clearing it with feet to spare.

One might expect their familiarity with wire frequently to prove their undoing, for the wire snares in which the farmers and others endeavour to catch them are usually made with ordinary fencing wire (not barb, of course) set in their paths through the brushwood, or the “racks” by which they enter the fields. Yet surprisingly few are caught in this way. Some people are always putting up snares, yet enquiries elicit the fact that three or four deer in a year is an exceptionally good bag. They say that as soon as a snare is put up in a runway deer cease using the latter, and I quite believe it. I have only myself seen two deer caught in two years by snaring, and it is noteworthy that both were bucks. I have been told by several that they have never caught a doe, or even heard of one being caught. The spreading antlers of the male make it impossible, I suppose, for him to slip out if once he puts his head through the noose.

Yet other things besides deer get caught in the snares, which perhaps (so, at least, I hope) deters people from using them more. I know of one sportsman who got into one when fox-hunting, and had the deuce of a fall. A farmer friend caught, and strangled, one of his own heifers; while in quite another district, where temporary permission was granted for the snaring of red deer, the practice was abandoned in haste because they caught and hanged so many ponies. Snaring, in fact, is not only cruel, but dangerous.

Lying up for deer with a gun is not, fortunately for the deer, often

successful; their wonderful noses enable them to detect danger in time. When pheasant shooting one often hears, "Buck forward!" but the quarry rarely comes to the guns. The only time this year I saw one come within shot my host was struggling in the folds of a wet mackintosh and his gun was leaning against a tree.

I have only once put up my gun at a deer, and a "stop" stepped out immediately behind it, which gave me such a fright that I have never repeated the act. At a farmers' shoot on one occasion the host armed some of his guests with five or six rounds of buckshot, as he wanted the deer reduced. The usual cry of "Buck forward!" caused everyone hurriedly to extract the number sixes and replace with buckshot. No deer arrived at the guns—but pheasants did, and, quite forgetting what they had in their barrels, those who hit their birds at all simply blew them to atoms.

The habits of fallow deer do not seem quite the same as those of their red cousins. This herd, at any rate, is not so bold in the rutting season—probably the result of persistent poaching—but they fight during the "rut" as frequently and as savagely as their proud relations. Red deer are usually found near water, but fallow deer seem less particular; indeed, I do not know where our local deer do drink. I never see their slots around the ponds, and there is scarcely a stream, certainly no river, in their particular district. They must drink somewhere, but evidently close proximity to water is not a *sine qua non*. One habit which the fallow share in common with the red deer is the use of a "fraying-stock." This is always a detached and solitary tree, even if situated in a wood, and the ground is often stamped hard around it by the constant traffic. A fraying-stock, I should perhaps explain, is a tree against which deer rub off the velvet and polish their antlers. One particular tree was an elderberry tree standing amidst a circle of dark yews and hollies. Within 200 yards of a main road and 50 yards of a public footpath, it was nevertheless completely hidden, and only found by my seeing a number of deer tracks leading towards it when the ground was particularly wet and the slots clearly defined. This tree was worn smooth and white and shiny like ivory, standing out clear against the dark background, the upper part covered with bark and moss, the lower rubbed clean, and the whole, of course, dead. The ground around was trampled flat and clear of vegetation in a complete circle, from constant use, for the space of several feet. After a dry spell the ground is trampled hard and smooth as a cement floor.

The local movements of the deer under my observation are beyond my comprehension. Detached parties travel immense distances across open country to coverts miles away, but always north and west. Yet there are good-sized coverts to the east; and, although there is a river, there is no main road of any consequence, nor a railway line, while the country is not more thickly populated. Yet east of this spot they never go. Why? North-west



FALLOW DEER JUMPING A WIRE FENCE



UNDER THE WIRE



CAUGHT BY NECK AND HORNS

they cross a single railway and a big river to join an offshoot of the herd. South they must cross a main-line railway (going under the railway arches, as I have proved) and travel over a range of hills and across (though greatly helped here by a chain of coverts) a thickly populated vale, in order to get back to their parent herd—sometimes visiting (in the autumn) a park herd *en route*.

I am inclined to believe their numbers are often increased by recruits from these tame herds, judging by the behaviour of one or two deer which I have come across. I often wonder if these particular semi-feral animals survive the chances of every man's hand against them long enough to become really wild. Occasionally, when the deer have been making themselves a nuisance, the farmers get up a sort of continental hunt—hounds and horsemen and guns combined. The result is with the gods. Often the hounds go away with a deer and the horsemen get a good hunt, while the unfortunate guns stand and shiver and see nothing. But sometimes the plan comes off, and the herd gets properly thinned. Two were killed by hounds and one by the guns at the last "hunt" I saw. Personally I do not think that, as a beast of the chase, the fallow deer ranks very high—at least, the does are a poor substitute for hinds. On the other hand, I can remember more than one hunt with the New Forest Buckhounds after buck, when the latter gave a better hunt than many a fat August stag with the Devon and Somerset. Although venison is at its best in summer, the chase is not. The lost herd, however, is unhunted by any regular pack, and it seems a pity such good material should be left to the snare of the poacher.

The fallow deer is not so destructive to crops as his red cousin, which partially accounts for his more profuse survival. I often see them in roots and young wheat and seeds, but they do not leave such a devastating trail behind them as the red deer often do. Nor have I ever seen them come into a garden to dig up potatoes, or enter an orchard (for apples) at night, like red deer. I will not assert that they do not do this, but I have never heard of it. They are shy and furtive haunters of the woodlands, and, though one may live among them, it is seldom that one sees them.

CHAPTER XX

THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF STAG-HUNTING

IN spite of being the most ancient of British sports there is not really a vast amount of English works dealing with the subject. Most of them are more or less based on Count Gaston de Foix's *Livre de Chasse*, written, or at least commenced, in May 1387. Gaston, third Count de Foix, often called Gaston Phœbus on account of his golden hair and virile beauty, died whilst on a bear hunt some four years later, according to W. A. and F. Baillie-Grohmann in their introduction to the *Master of Game* (Chatto and Windus, 1909); but in another account he is stated as dying a bit later, in 1394, "with eight hundred couple of hounds in his kennels," a circumstance which makes the most fashionable Hunts of modern times sound very humble establishments by comparison!

Next in importance comes that usually unacknowledged parent of British sporting literature, *The Litel Symple Book*, "which, if it pleaseth your aforesaid Lordship, shall be named and called 'The Master of Game.'" This book, written between 1406-1413 by Edward, second Duke of York, whilst imprisoned in Pevensey Castle, is most of it a literal translation of the *Livre de Chasse*, but five chapters of it are his own. The student of venerie will find there is little he did not know of stag-hunting, and even with the advance of modern scientific research, there are surprisingly few errors one can find in his natural history even.

Perhaps the most remarkable error is the one, repeated by most old writers on natural history, "a hart liveth longest of any beast of the chase for he may live a hundred years." This idea was firmly believed by Highlanders—witness the well-known Gaelic rhyme, too well known to be worth repeating. There is also the legend of the white hind of Loch Treig, said to be 160 years old, which was supposed to have been known by Captain Macdonald of Tulloch for fifty years, and by his father and grandfather for similar periods. I think this legend might well be accounted for by albino deer.

Albinos and freaks are not so very rare. "Hummels" (hornless deer) or "nott" stags, as they are called in the West Country, for example, are far from common, but from time to time one is reported, usually in Culborne Woods. In due course he succumbs to hounds, yet before long another is

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seen in the same woods. This looks as if the hornless state is hereditary, and that the hummel can beget "polled" stock. If so, there is also possibly truth in the Scotch idea, which is often advanced and equally as often disputed, that "switches" beget switch horn deer. Albino deer, by the way, are common enough in parks. White examples of red deer are, or were, kept at Langley, Welbeck, Woburn, etc. But as regards the wild state, I have only come across one in the West Country, and that a stuffed head—the property of the Chadwick Healy family. I have forgotten exactly where he was found and killed, but recall that he was an Exmoor stag.

Perhaps the most interesting chapters of all in *The Master of Game* are those on harbouring—an art which one gathers has never been carried to the same state of proficiency as on the Continent. Moreover, Mr. Baillie-Grohmann's Appendix to the 1909 edition (Chatto and Windus) is most interesting. Stag-hunting seems to have been in a bad way even before the great Civil War, which appears to have been, as before mentioned, the end of stag-hunting as the premier sport. At all events, Henri IV of France sent three of his best huntsmen—Deprez, de Beaumont, and de Saint Ravy—to instruct English sportsmen, the English Court hunting having degenerated into coursing stags in a park. There is also in this Appendix an interesting section on hunting cries, and although the Norman origin of hound language seems to be indisputable, apparently "Tally ho!" (*il est allé ho!*) appears to be of only seventeenth-century importation, brought in by the aforementioned huntsmen.

Personally, George Turberville's *The Noble Arte of Venerie* (1576) attracts me more than any of the old authors, "Wherein is handled and set out the Virtues, Nature, and Properties of Sundrie Chaces, translated and collected for the pleasure of all Noblemen and gentlemen out of the best approved authors . . . and reduced in such order and proper termes as are used here in this noble realme of England." His chapter on "The Virtue and Properties of the Hart" would fairly startle the modern medicine man! So also would "The Nature and Subtilties of Hartes" the up-to-date naturalist. One of his statements, for example, is that when "hartes passe great rivers or some arme of the sea to go to 'rut' in some isle or forest they assemble in great herds, and knowing which is the strongest and best swimmer, make him go foremost. Then he which cometh next him stayeth his head upon the back of the first," and so *ad infinitum*! He quotes Pliny as saying deer "can endure to swymme thirtee myles endwayes." Certainly deer are very strong swimmers, but thirty miles is a bit stiff!

Mr. Millais, in *British Deer and their Horns* (page 43), propounds the question: How does a stag swim? He says during two seasons he asked this question of his companions on the hill, and their answers were about equally opposed, one half asserting that only the head and upper part of the neck are clear of the water; while the others insisted that the whole line of

the back appears above the surface. I have seen plenty of deer swimming, and answering hastily I would say the former was the correct description. But in thinking it over I seem to remember seeing the line of the back on many occasions, so I should be sorry to make any statement, in spite of having a photo of a stag with only his head and a bit of neck showing above water.

I think that, owing to want of space, we may pass over such important works as *Twici*, *The Boke of St. Albans*, and even perhaps Richard Blome's *Gentleman's Recreation*, published in 1686, and come down to Collyns, not only author of the most authoritative book on English stag-hunting, but the man who by sheer enthusiasm revived an almost extinct sport. Dr. Palk Collyns, surgeon, of Dulverton, was a remarkable character, and in the preface to his *Chase of the Wild Red Deer*, published some forty years after the original edition, the Editor only does him justice in saying, "One cannot but perceive . . . the laudable exertions of the great landowners were both fostered and directed to the proper quarters by the wise offices of the country doctor, whose active devotion to his calling gave him access to all classes." Apparently apathy, poaching, and selfish but enthusiastic fox-hunters were the chief difficulties to overcome. With regard to contemporary fox-hunters who did not quite play the game, I would refer the reader to an article in *The Sporting Magazine*, December 1824, entitled "A serious charge against some Devonshire sportsmen." After the sale of the North Devon staghounds the country was unhunted until 1827, when an attempt was made to form a subscription pack. This failed, and the country was then hunted until 1833 by Sir A. Chichester of Barnstaple, with "considerable success." When he gave up, the survivors of an already diminished herd of deer were left to the assaults of the poacher. Let us quote the worthy doctor: "It was at this time, in the year 1837, when the prospect seemed blank and dreary, that I made an effort to revive the sport, and I claim for myself the credit of having, by untiring labour and persevering industry, succeeded in creating a stimulus to which the existence of a pack of staghounds at the present moment is, I humbly venture to say, mainly due."

Thanks to the aid of Mr. Stuckely Lucas and Mr. George Hall, and incidentally to Charles Davis, huntsman to Her Majesty's Staghounds (who supplied six couple of hounds), and last but not least the sinews of war in the form of a subscription, a pack of sorts was able to take the field under a committee. For many years the pack passed through a somewhat chequered career, and in 1849 had to go for assistance to a "foreigner" (*anglicé*, up-countryman, in Devon dialect), namely, a Mr. Theobald, who had previously only hunted carted deer and whose hounds were not very successful when pitted against the wild. Then followed Mr. Luxton, and in 1851 Captain West, another carted deer hunter, who was much more successful than his predecessor in that line. It was not until 1855, however, that the right man



"A BYE DAY ON THE CLIFFS"

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was found, to wit Mr. Fenwick Bisset, a Berkshire gentleman who was renting Lord Carnarvon's place, Pixton Park, for the shooting. So keen did he become on stag-hunting that he took on the onerous duty of Master, and to him and the sporting doctor and a few of the great landowners, more particularly the Aeland and Fortescue families, is the restoration of stag-hunting due. It is unnecessary to go into detail which can be obtained in the many books written on West Country stag-hunting, but a rough summary may not be out of place. In 1825 was sold the last and only pack in England (the North Devon) hunting wild deer, yet to-day there are five packs hunting wild deer—the Devon and Somerset, Tiverton, Quantock Staghounds, the New Forest, and the Lunedale and Oxenholme—i.e. three in the West and two others.

It is unnecessary to quote at length from *The Chase of the Wild Red Deer*, for it is so well known, and one can only say to those few who have not read it that it is time they did.

The next most important work, in my opinion, is *Records of Stag-hunting on Exmoor*, by the Hon. (now Sir) John Fortescue (Chapman and Hall, 1887). The author's chapters on the "Domain of the Red Deer" and the "Forest of Exmoor" are not the least interesting of an interesting book; but for sheer charm and literary skill the same writer's delightful "Story of a Red Deer" defeats even his own best efforts, and the latter are very good, notably "My Native Devon" (of later date), although it has little about stag-hunting in it. No other writer, save one only, Richard Jefferies, of whom more anon, has succeeded in placing on paper the charm of the West Country and stag-hunting, so that even those uninterested in sport cannot but be attracted. His dedication alone is a most attractive bit of writing, particularly, I think, the following: "For though I would have you love the stories of great men . . . yet I would have you take no less delight in the birds and beasts that share with you your home . . . whereby you will gain not only that which the great Mr. Milton (in his tract on Education) hath called the helpful experiences of hunters, fowlers, and fishermen, but such a love of God's creatures as will make the world fuller of joys for you, because fuller of friends."

The animal story has come into its own with a vengeance of late years, but I am afraid is often looked on by animal lovers with some suspicion. One cannot but notice that the popular comic animal of the humorous artist seldom appeals to Nature lovers, and the same is still more obviously true in the case of stories in which the animals are made to talk and think like human beings. Yet Fortescue's birds and beasts talk Devon, and broad Devon at that, but somehow they never sound unnatural.

In 1902 was published *Stag-hunting with the Devon and Somerset*, by Philip Evered (Chatto and Windus). Mr. Evered, who was for many years Secretary

of the Staghounds, writes not only with knowledge, but at times, I think, with great descriptive feeling. His descriptions of the moor are often most attractive, as this will show: "Some of the most impressive aspects, however, are undoubtedly those when the storm fiend is abroad and the elements at play. The blank cartridge of a westerly gale, against which the galloping deer cannot force their way over the open, is all very well, but when double-shotted with hail it is enough to make the boldest horseman turn and fly for the shelter of the nearest black fence, where he may cower until the squall sweeps by."

The short article in the *Encyclopædia of Sport*, by L. J. Bathurst, and the chapters on stag-hunting in *The Red Deer* and others of the Fur, Feather and Fin Series by Lord Ebrington, should not be omitted either.

The literature of the carted deer is more limited. Personally, I think that from an instructional point of view the section devoted to this form of hunting in *The Encyclopædia of Sport*, by Lord Ribblesdale, is the most useful. *The History of the Royal Buckhounds*, by Hore (published by Remington, 1894), and *The Queen's Hounds*, by Lord Ribblesdale (published by Longmans, Green & Co., 1893), are probably the best known.

To return, however, to the chase of the wild deer, it is rather remarkable that the most attractive book on stag-hunting was written by one who, although a born naturalist, really knew little about the sport, yet seems, when he visited Exmoor, to have absorbed local knowledge with amazing thoroughness. This book is Richard Jefferies' *Red Deer*, published in 1888. His first two chapters, "Red Deer Land" and "Wild Exmoor," have never been surpassed as word pictures of that romantic country; but as a bit of descriptive writing the closing sentences of Chapter IX are my own especial favourites: "Sometimes, in the hottest noontide of summer, when the sky is clear, the wood still, and the vapour of heat lying about the hillsides, there comes from unknown distances a roll and vibration like heavy thunder, fined to a tremble in the air. It is an inexplicable sound. There are no visible thunder clouds, no forts within audible distance. Perhaps it is the implacable Drake discharging his enchanted cannon in the azure air against the enemies of England."

But beyond all, Richard Jefferies put on paper, in his own inimitable manner, what we have all noticed but cannot express—the old-world charm of the West Country. He says: "Something else, too, besides the red deer, has survived, and that is courtesy. . . . Wild as Exmoor is, and far from the centres of civilization, there is more courtesy and kindness in the inhabitants of Red Deer Land than where the right to lead the van of modern life is loudly claimed."

DEER-STALKING



DEER-COURSING
and by the time the deer
had been shot the hunters
were waiting to be shot
themselves. Many have
been shot and many

DEER-COURSING

From a Drawing by Lionel Edwards and Frank Wallace

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had been shot the hunters
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CHAPTER XXI

ON THE MERITS OF DEER-STALKING

"It is a noble sport,
To recreate the mindes of men."

GEORGE GASCOIGNE.

DEER-STALKING was my first love and, with one exception, it will be my last. I know that I am quite illogical and unreasonable, for, so far as the ethics of sport are concerned, Scottish deer-stalking is beaten on almost every point. Yet logic is not everything. Many lands can show scenery framed on a far more lofty and awe-inspiring plan, more terrific, and more sublime than any within these islands. The wonders of the Rocky Mountains, the steep hill slopes of New Zealand, the jungles, plains, and hills of India and Africa, the tremendous and aloof mountain ranges of Central Asia, are world famed. Our tiny hills and shallow valleys are nothing to them, yet in no country in the world is it possible to revel in such tender colourings, such vivid contrasts, as in Scotland. No country in the world can so wrap itself about your heart. Well was it likened by a great artist to a wet pebble. It may be that in the very minuteness of its character lies the gist of the matter, for the heart of man is finite and capable of grasping only that which lies within a circumscribed area. I will even admit that the chase of the wild deer is but a poor parody of the "real thing," that it is an artificial product of an artificial age. The deer are artificially fed; but we none of us live under natural conditions. We go to the far beat in motor-cars; but we have to be back for dinner at eight o'clock. Artificial marches have to be observed; an artificial bill waits for the hapless tenant at the season's end; and artificial horns not infrequently adorn artificial baronial halls. The whole thing, when you consider it in cold blood, reeks of artificiality. We have all been born too late. Charles St. John has crossed the last march, and we can no longer go a-hunting the muckle hart across half Scotland with never a thought of trespass, vengeful keepers, and the lock-up. These are not the good old days, and if they were we should find something to grumble at. So for Heaven's sake let us make the best of it! He must be but a poor creature who cannot forget such things with a day in the forest before him. The

burn sings in the valley, the grouse calls from the moor, and in the grass-clad corrie lies a herd of deer ! What does anything matter at such a moment ! In the evening, of course, if you happen to have made a mess of things and sent the finest stag you ever saw over the march, it is a different matter. Everything is black, and deer-stalking the poorest thing in a poor world. Failures, however, wretched as they are, may prove the best teachers, and from them we may learn more than from any success. Even on a blank day there is sure to be much that will delight and repay the observer : something that will come in useful on a future occasion.

There are many who profess to despise deer-stalking. The attitude of some it is easy to understand, for those who have killed large and dangerous game all over the world must necessarily chafe at the circumscribed limits of a Highland deer forest and the conditions under which the sport is conducted. The highest form of stalking is the pursuit of a genuinely wild animal living under natural conditions, upon ground which is of the beast's own choosing, preferably in mountainous country. Scottish deer-stalking does not fall within this definition and cannot be regarded as the highest form of stalking. Those, therefore, who have enjoyed the real thing are perfectly justified in the attitude they adopt.

There is a class, however, who have never stalked a Scottish red deer, and who have certainly never hunted big game, who pour scorn upon a fine sport and say they would as soon shoot a donkey as be led up to a herd of deer by a professional stalker and told which beast to take. Deer-stalking in Scotland is a fine sport ; the very artificiality under which it exists renders it the more difficult ; and, paradoxical as it may seem, the chances of success more uncertain.

In the wilds of Africa and Asia there are no marches to regard, and your quarry, lost one day, may still be followed and, with reasonable luck, killed. In Scotland a dozen incidents combine to thwart you should your beast be lost through a miscalculation or bad shooting. Mist may stop stalking for days. Your stag may go right off the ground altogether ; he may go into the sanctuary ; he may move on to another beat and be killed by some more fortunate sportsman. The wind, that great factor in deer-stalking, may in certain localities clear the ground of every beast for days and render Naboth jubilant at his neighbour's expense. Deer, too, in Scotland know perfectly well that the sight or, to an even greater extent, the scent of man means danger and, having once realised his proximity, will occupy as short a time as possible in getting away from it. In the summer they are, comparatively speaking, tame ; but once let the stalking begin and no animal knows better how to take care of himself. It is a common sight to see deer from the road between Lairg and Lochmore and in many other parts of Scotland. They will stand quietly watching, but directly a foot is set off the road they move

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away. All wild animals realise at once when they are safe, and in such sanctuaries as the Yellowstone Park and the African game reserves exhibit a degree of tameness which is surprising. Animals which have never seen man and which have never been hunted, though in these days they are rare, do not show the same alarm, and are consequently easier to stalk. By this I do not wish to imply that it is an easier matter to get a shot at a bongo or an *Ovis ammon* than at a red deer, but merely to point out that Highland stalking is not a sport to despise.

Many men who have shot big game and are experienced stalkers, were they put down in a Highland forest and told to stalk deer in a particular place, would fail, simply because they have not that intimate local knowledge which the sport requires. There are certain spots, where currents of air meet, where it is an absolute impossibility to approach a stag. Only experience can teach the sportsman where they lie, and an inexperienced stalker might easily clear a forest of deer for days by making one false move.

If no artificial marches existed, on the deer being alarmed the stalker would be free to follow them and probably obtain a second shot. Under existing conditions such a chance is problematical and would in any case take some skill to secure. Hence the need for a stalker who knows the ground really intimately; who can move about in a restricted area obtaining for his "gentleman" a maximum of sport, and at the same time disturbing the ground as little as possible. It is only a man who knows nothing who thinks he knows everything, and the stalker with the most experience will be the first to admit that there is ever something to be learned.

There is no doubt that the demand for deer forests is not so great as it was formerly—though it shows now, in 1926, an upward tendency—while that for large grouse moors has enormously increased. They are both luxuries; but whereas the cost of a grouse moor may be calculated on a rough basis at one pound per brace, even since the War, each stag will work out at something like twenty to twenty-five pounds. A host, therefore, with equal expenditure, can entertain a far greater number of his friends on a grouse moor than is possible on a deer forest. People nowadays, too, want far more for their money than they did. The modest shooting lodge to which Brixey and Fribbles invited Captain Downey has given place to the modern luxurious mansion with hot baths, electric light, and motor-cars. This aspect of the case has become enormously magnified since 1914. The modern youth—and youth, we are told, now dominates everything—will not stalk. He hates getting hot and wet. He hates crawling, and, above all, he hates climbing. There is now a great deal of truth in the complaints of stalkers who declare that many of those with whom they stalk will not work for their stags, start late for the forest, and, to quote the priggish and pedantic words of Lightfoot, "are filled with alarm at the aerial perspective of the

mountain crest." The only form of sport in which they care to participate—a grand sport, too, when looked at in the right light—being enjoyed from the comfortable shelter of a grouse butt with a hot lunch to follow.

"The dun tenants of the waste," as old Scrope called them, are beautiful even in repose; but it is that wonderful slashing trot which has captured the hearts of so many. Just as the grouse is associated with the great velvety purple banks of heather, so is the red deer, with his fine, free-moving action and his royal mien, the rightful owner of the rock-sprinkled corries. Though no warrantable stag were seen at all, the corries and hills are always there. Your true stalker is always a lover of the beautiful, and but few of them resemble the Englishman who, on visiting a forest for the first time and being asked what he thought of the scenery, replied, "Oh! I couldn't see any for mountains!" Another whom I recently met on his first visit to the Highlands thought it "very comical" to see the hills "set in rows!" though that in no way interfered with his thorough appreciation of the day's sport.

There is no prettier sight than to watch a herd of red deer basking on the hillside during a hot July day. The little calves chase each other through the long grass, while their mothers lie drowsily amongst the rocks and heather, their bodies exposed and their legs stretched wide in the endeavour to get as much sun as possible. I was overlooking a scene like this one day last year when I dropped in for a little domestic difference which was very pretty to see. A tiny calf, with a very dark coat, irregularly spotted with large white splashes, and evidently born late in the year, was engaged on his evening meal. A big brother seeing this thought he had been forgotten, and coming up, gave the intruder a butt on the side. However, the little chap was having too good a time to give in readily, and stuck to his guns like a man. Keeping a wary eye on his mother, the other one made a second unsuccessful attempt. A third failure, however, convinced him that it was no good, and he made off, to return later and have his turn. His mother, apparently, was not given to fussing over her children, and took quite an impersonal interest in the proceedings, merely pausing for a second to give her little son a casual lick before she resumed feeding. When their wayward offspring become too disobedient, hinds will use their fore legs with which to chastise them.

One stag, I suppose, is very much like another to most people; but a view at close quarters through a glass reveals almost as much character as may be seen in the faces of some people. One has a stupid, weak, silly look, with vacant, staring eyes, and a beast like this usually carries a light skin. Another, with his dark red coat, clean muscular body, slender legs, and full, melting eye, seems the personification of activity and beauty; for it may be taken as a general rule that the dark-coated stags are the best, especially if they have a well-defined black line down the middle of the back.

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Deer are much bothered by flies in the hot weather, and in a very dry summer low-lying forests will be entirely denuded of stags, often until the beginning of the rut. Hinds do not leave their accustomed haunts so readily; but I am convinced in my own mind that the reason why, in such a year, for instance, as 1925, apparently big stags weighed perhaps two or three stones less than might have been expected, is due to the fact that they spent the period during which they should have been putting on weight, on the high ground where the feeding was poor. In a wet summer, when they remain low down, where the feed is good, they will usually be found to weigh well. When rain threatens it is amusing to watch stags chasing each other, as they often do, indulging in the most aimless gallops.

I have seen deer of both sexes using soiling pools, depressions in the peaty soil, early in the summer, though the most usual time is during the rutting season. I was spying a distant hillside one day in August, when some bright object flashing in the sun caught my eye, and the glass revealed a stag. He was standing shaking himself by the edge of one of these pools, the water flying off him in all directions. It was the sun flashing on this which had attracted my attention.

Their horns, when the velvet is just shed, are visible from a great distance, white as ivory, though they rapidly colour. The colour itself varies with the individual and to a less extent with the object on which they rub their horns. In a dry season the velvet is later in cleaning than in a wet one, and in a dry season, too, I fancy, horns are apt to be darker in colour than when the weather is wet.

They are wonderful jumpers, as may be imagined. I have seen a hind clear 15 feet or so, and buck as high as a tall man merely to avoid a small drain; and also, at a drive, a stag jump clean over one of the beaters, taking a fence at the same time. There is still extant the record of a famous leap made by a stag down on the borders of Ettrick during a hunt by one of the old Scottish Kings. The place is known as "The Hart's Leap," and is commemorated by two stones which the Monarch had erected to mark the spot. They measure 28 feet apart.

Stalking is by far the most sporting method of killing deer, though drives are occasionally resorted to. The late Lord Burton used to entertain King Edward in regal fashion at Glenquoich, of which he was the tenant for many years. "The King's butt" still stands above the Kingie face, which he leased with Glenquoich, and it must have been a wonderful sight to see great herds of stags moving along this magnificent glen. Even these drives, which were well managed, were not always successful, and they are very bad for any forest if indulged in often. On one occasion at Glenquoich the deer refused to face the rifles, broke through the beaters, and scattered all over the surrounding forests.

One of the stalkers of Glenquoich, Donald McLaren by name, was a great character. He once walked home, three miles, bent double because he thought his back was broken! A stone had slipped inside his coat, just over the spine. He thought his spine was broken in two and that one end, resting on the other, would slip if he moved hastily!

At one of the drives for King Edward, McLaren was posted with Sir Schomberg McDonell. The latter's rifle jammed at a critical moment and a lot of deer went by unharmed. After the drive, by way of cheering up McLaren, who was rather downcast, Sir Schomberg said, "Well, Donald, never mind! Come along with me. I'll introduce you to His Majesty, and you shall talk to him."

"Na, na," said Donald, "it's yesterday I was taalking to him. I'll no go up now; but just you go along and speak to him if you wish to. I've plenty wor-rk here!"

The late Walter Winans used to organise drives on an immense scale in the group of forests stretching from sea to sea, which he rented.

Driving a wood is another matter, though this has to be done with great judgment, and "moving" is a far better term to apply when the job is properly managed. In one forest I know drives of this sort used to be held. They rather reminded me of the *Punch* picture of the head keeper who wanted "a couple of Lords here and a couple of Lords there," while the unfortunate commoner took his chance with the beaters!

An army of ponies and ghillies escorted the chosen to the high places, usually accompanied by a bevy of the fair sex. When I saw the latter, showing well up on the skyline, removing their outer garments while their attendant swains made them as comfortable as possible, their musical comments, punctuated by bursts of laughter, ringing out meanwhile over the wood, I confess that I scarcely expected the drive to be a success. At length they quieted down and silence reigned. Presently through the glass a herd of about a hundred and fifty stags, nearly all young beasts, could be seen emerging from the wood and making their doubtful way up the hillside to the, more or less concealed, sportsmen. Their advance brought them to within two or three hundred yards of a scion of the nobility who had never seen a wild stag before. Having no rifle, he had borrowed a double-barrelled .450 black powder Express. This ancient piece of ordnance he proceeded to bring into action. I counted fourteen double shots, and the hillside about him, it being a hot, still, summer day, looked exactly as it does when heather burning is in process. The horrified deer dashed back into the wood, one of their number being wounded; later small bands of the unfortunate animals broke past one of the commoners, who succeeded in killing five; but, in spite of this, the drive was not an unqualified success. The most dangerous part was after its conclusion. Odd rifles suddenly appeared from their hiding-

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places and held animated conversation as to the whereabouts of imaginary stags. Stalkers and keepers emerged from the wood. One or two bewildered deer, frightened out of their senses at the wholesale invasion of their fastnesses, rushed wildly about the hillside. Rifles popped, bullets whizzed overhead. Fortunately no one was killed, but on the whole I do not recommend driving!

I have seldom heard of more than fifteen or twenty stags being killed in a drive, usually not so many. In his *Memories of Sixty Years*, the late Lord Warwick relates that he and Sir Charles Mordaunt, at Glenfeshie, killed twenty-one stags in a single day's stalking, which, I should imagine, is a record.

In forests where a large tract of ground or some particular corrie is arbitrarily dignified by the name of "sanctuary" I think deer may be judiciously moved at times, with advantage. Many old beasts of both sexes are quite cunning enough to remain in such a spot until well after the close of the stalking season, and while doing no good to the forest, gradually deteriorate year after year themselves, eating the food which might be more usefully assimilated by their neighbours, until they die of old age.

A better plan in many places, at any rate, is to regard as a sanctuary that portion of the ground on which the greater part of the stock of deer happens to be. By this method the bulk of the deer are not disturbed, and such old beasts can be picked off and the forest thus improved. Often, however, the sanctuary is but a name. I once asked if there was any difference between the sanctuary and a certain beat. "Oh yes!" was the naive reply. "X never goes into the sanctuary if he finds anything outside!"

Formerly coursing was much in vogue among the great nobles, and, though the late Lochiel in a delightful description confessed to having indulged in his youth in surreptitious sport of this kind, there is only one forest where it was habitually practised. The late Mr. Angelo at Culachy kept a fine kennel of deerhounds. He had a cross of Irish wolfhound, one of his dogs standing 34 inches at the shoulder, and one which I saw, "Oich," was 32 inches.

The coursing took place on two plateaux, the hounds being in couples at different points, a fast, light beast to bay the deer, and a heavier dog to pull him down. The movements of the stag which it was intended to hunt were signalled by a stalker in advance, and when the animal moved into such a position that the hounds would see him first, they were loosed. Sometimes it happened that as many as six hounds were after one stag, though this was not usual, but transpired from the necessity of keeping the course within the march. Once having picked their beast, the hounds would run him right through a herd of deer, though they would hunt a wounded in preference to a "cold" stag. It was very severe on the hounds, and

they only lasted for a year or two. The average course extended to about two miles, and a really first-class dog would pull down his quarry unaided. From a spectacular point of view, this sport is easily first, but under present conditions it can never become popular. It is not every forest which is adapted to it, and your neighbour would scarcely appreciate the beauty of the sight if, in the middle of a stalk, a stag and a couple of deerhounds dashed wildly through the middle of his ground scattering the deer in all directions.

CHAPTER XXII

STAGS' HEADS

"His head was high, and large in each degree,
Well palmed eke, and seemed full found to be."

GEORGE TURBERVILLE.

THE chief reason why the horns of the *Cervidae* present so many features of interest lies in their never-ending variety. Place twenty of the finest heads of any other species of game alongside one another, and whether they be kudu, sable, ibex, or the great sheep, you will notice very little difference. One head may be thicker than another, it will vary to some extent in shape and the divergence of the horns, the record head will have a few additional inches in length, but there the dissimilarity ends. No two heads of red or roe deer, with which we are chiefly concerned in these islands—though the same applies to the wapiti of America and Asia and other varieties of deer—are alike, even to a casual eye; and so to the study of their horns attaches a perennial interest.

Broadly speaking, the characteristics of stags' heads are similar; that is, they usually follow regular rules of growth, though these rules are governed in the case of the individual by two important factors—heredity and environment.

Thus the red deer of Devon and Somerset carry strong, rough heads characterised by long horns, and often lack width; Irish heads, again, tend to divide into two forks without forming a cup. The latter formation is often cited as being the typical characteristic of the wild Scottish stag; but I am bound to confess that with an experience extending to over thirty years, I have scarcely ever seen a good head with well-formed cups on both horns. Quite the most perfect example I have ever come across was a little royal from Park, in the island of Lewis, shot by Mrs. Platt in 1912. Absolutely symmetrical, with all the points well developed, the horns only measured 25 inches in length; but the cups on each were perfect.

Heads to which there is not attached some sort of an "if" are extremely rare. How often when looking at a particular head one hears the remark, "If only the brows were a bit longer, what a grand head that would be!"; "If only that point were not missing!"; "If only it were a little wider!";

or "If one could only put the tops of that head on to the one with the good lower points"; and so it goes on. I have handled and seen hundreds of heads in my life, but there are very, very few which I should pick out as perfect. The most perfect royal I have ever seen was shot in Otago, New Zealand, by Con Hodgkinson, the well-known New Zealand guide. It hung in the Christchurch Exhibition of 1907. A 14-pointer, shot by his brother Harold, and another royal killed by Mr. Melville Gray, approached it very closely.

Another magnificent head is the 16-pointer killed in New Zealand, from the same herd, by Lord Belper in 1925. His bag was a remarkable one and quite the best which have ever been secured by one rifle in this district. The 16-pointer is longer and more massive than a 14-pointer, but the latter has wonderful grace and symmetry, with almost perfect tops. Mr. Millais has a perfect wapiti head which he obtained from Lord Powerscourt; but we are wandering rather far from Scottish deer, though all the New Zealand stags I have mentioned were descended from deer imported from Invermark in 1870.

It is a very rash statement to make, but I think the best Scottish head I have ever seen is a 14-pointer lent to the Exhibition of British Deer Heads, which I organised at the request of Mr. Hudson, the managing director of *Country Life*, in 1913. Here were collected, not all, but certainly the majority of the best heads killed in Scotland during comparatively recent years. This particular head, to my mind, stood out from all the rest, not even excluding the Glenfiddich head of 1831, which is narrow in the span, or Lord Tweedmouth's Guisachan royal killed in 1880. It was lent to the Exhibition by Mrs. Gordon Cumming.

Other heads which I have seen, which, if not perfect, are at least superior to that very limited number which may fairly be termed first-class, are the 14-pointer killed by Lord David Kennedy at Ardverikie; a magnificent 9-pointer killed by Mr. Walter Jones at Meoble in 1914; a 14-pointer killed by Mr. A. S. Bowlby at Barrisdale in 1898; a 13-pointer killed by Colonel Baillie of Dochfour at Glenquoich in 1902; and that is about all. The 11-pointer killed by Major Bell at Affarie in 1921 is certainly one of the best, if not *the* best, head killed in Scotland since the War.¹ I do not think, however, that it is quite in the same class as the others I have mentioned. I do not say that other and better heads have not been killed. I have no doubt that enthusiastic stalkers who take the trouble to read these lines will say, "Oh! this chap doesn't know much about heads. What about that head So-and-so killed in —? I've seen all the heads mentioned, and this was ever so much better."

¹ A royal killed by Col. Shoolbred at Wyvis in 1925, and a royal killed by Mr. S. Martineau at Novar in 1926, are quite as good as Major Bell's Affarie 11-pointer.

So I have no doubt it was—in *the opinion of others*. Therein lies the crux of the whole matter.

What are the necessary and essential characteristics of a first-class head?

First of all it must have length. That is, it must, at any rate, have a length of horn of at least 34 inches. Combined with length the horn should be thick and rough, the points must be long and sharp, and the span—or inside measurement between the main beams—must be wide. Measurements are, of course, the chief factors in deciding between the rival merits of different heads. All good heads will measure well, but some good measurements divorced from other qualifications do not make a trophy first class. Nor do they take into account the infinitesimal curves and gradations of horn which are so important. Beauty of form is, in my opinion, second only to length in judging a head, and it is this very factor which makes it impossible that there ever—or only in very exceptional years—can be such a thing as “*the best head of the season*.” Man’s taste, fortunately, is individual, and for just the same reason that there is no such thing as “*the best stag’s head*,” no such being—fortunately!—as *the most beautiful woman*, nor any such work of art as *the most beautiful picture*, exists. All we can go so far as to say is, that a particular object conforms most nearly to the canons laid down for deciding as to the merits of the finest objects of that order. Individual taste decides the rest.

In the case of a stag’s head one man would go for points, another for length, another for width—this is particularly the case with old stalkers—another for thickness or roughness of horn, and the stag has yet to be born who combines all these qualities in such a way as to reconcile conflicting opinions and enables a unanimous verdict to proclaim it *the best stag’s head* in existence.

A short, thick head with a large number of points, usually very short, is unworthy to be classed with a long, symmetrical head formed on naturally beautiful lines and with a full complement of well-developed tines. That is my own view with which doubtless some will disagree. Only to-day a stalker asked me which was the best head of the season, and I told him that it was impossible for me to say, for the reasons which I have just stated.

Measurements are the only real test as to whether a head is “good.” Many a time one hears, “So-and-so killed a very good head in such-and-such a forest.” The head may be good according to local standards, but many stalkers take a very short-sighted view of such matters, and the famous head, when seen, turns out to be a very ordinary affair. If one hears that a head, say, 32 inches long, with a beam of $4\frac{1}{2}$ and a span of 26, has been killed, it is possible to form some sort of idea of its class. For this reason I would urge owners and lessees of forests to impress the importance of measurements

on their stalkers. Such measurements are quite easy to take, three only being really necessary, though in conjunction with these others are of value. It is best to use a steel tape, as it does not stretch or shrink. The three important measurements are:—

Length. From the lower edge of the coronet or burr at the base of the horn, over its edge and along the outside curve of the horn to its longest point tip.

Beam. The circumference of the horn at its thinnest part between the bay and tray—that is, the second and third—points. If the bay is absent, between the brow and tray.¹

Span. The greatest width between the main beams in a straight line.

The outside spread depends entirely on the angle at which the points, either the trays or tops, diverge from the main beam. This measurement is of value taken in conjunction with the three important ones, but of little use alone. Measurements are frequently given “round the coronet” and sometimes below the brow point, and though these may be of interest in exceptional cases, they are of no real value by themselves in estimating the quality of a head. Some owners of trophies are very sensitive about their measurements. It is quite easy to add an inch or so to the length of a horn by being a little hurried during the more delicate moments of the operation! One man I knew always gave the length of his heads as at least an inch and a half in excess of their true measurements! Such errors are easily detected and in the majority of cases are genuine. Deliberately false measurements given from the selfish motive of endeavouring to go one better than your neighbour are too childish to be worthy of notice.

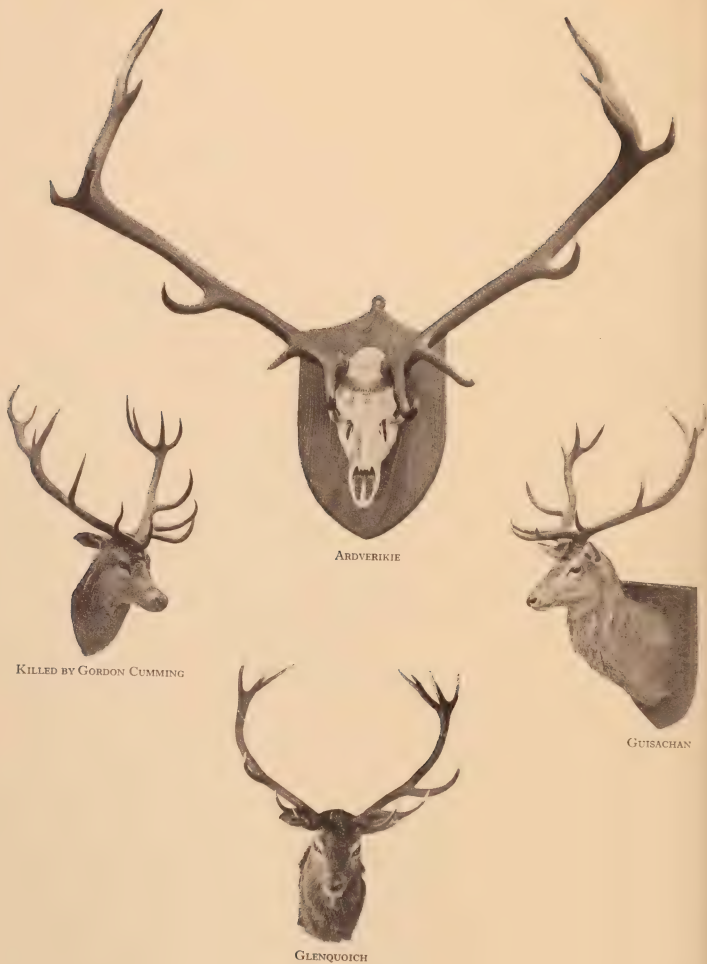
It is of course quite useless to take the length of a horn “in a straight line” or “from the coronet to below the tops,” though it is astonishing how frequently I have had such measurements sent to me. Needless to say, it is quite impossible to obtain any idea of a head from such figures.

In New Zealand attention is paid to weight of skulls and horns, but in this country, when deciding the merits of different heads, such a factor is not of great importance.

The final method, adopted in Germany and Austria for estimating the better of two heads of nearly equal merit and weight, was to immerse them, upside down, in a large vessel full of water and fitted with a graduated scale. Whichever displaced the greatest quantity was adjudged the better.

Far greater interest, however, is taken in heads on the Continent than in this country, where the man in the street does not know the difference between the head of a wapiti and that of a red deer.

¹ Captain Donne, in *Red Deer Stalking in New Zealand*, gives a diagram showing that the beam should be taken between the tray point and the tops. This method is incorrect.



ARDVERIKIE

KILLED BY GORDON CUMMING

GUISACHAN

GLENQUICH

Scarcely a season passes without some reference being made to "The deterioration of Scottish deer." That heads have deteriorated since Pleistocene times is, unfortunately, only too true; but that they have degenerated to any great extent during the past hundred and fifty years—which is about the period usually meant by people who deprecate modern heads—I very much doubt. "Sixty, seventy, eighty, and a hundred years ago a very small proportion of stags were killed compared to the annually increasing numbers of the present day." (I wrote thus in 1913.) "Heads were not valued then as they are now, and doubtless the majority have been allowed to sink into oblivion. In one respect, however, they were superior. Speaking, again generally, the most obvious comparison between the heads killed before 1875 and subsequent to that date, which were shown at the Exhibition of British Deer Heads in 1913, was the lack of 'style' of modern heads. So far as actual measurements go, there is very little to choose between the best heads of recent years and those killed during the middle of the nineteenth century. But in actual 'style,' thickness, roughness, shape, etc., the old heads were, on the whole, superior. In this sense heads have deteriorated."

The late Lord Burton repeatedly said that during his thirty-one years' tenancy of Glenquoich he had seen no deterioration, and in a correspondence which took place some years ago in *Country Life* the majority of owners and lessees agreed. The wonder is that so many good heads are killed, though such heads always, except in the case of stragglers or wood stags, come from forests which are in the hands of their owners or are let on long leases.

But though so far as measurements go, as good stags are killed now as in the days of Scrope, or later St. John, the general standard could be raised to a much higher level if modern conditions permitted. As has been pointed out many times, the fatal yearly tenancy is at the root of the whole matter. So long as forty ordinary heads are worth more to their owner than ten or twenty really good ones, so long will the present standard remain stationary. If it were possible for five or six owners of adjoining deer forests to agree to kill off all their old and weedy hinds and stags, never to kill a good stag until he had reached his prime, and to reduce the stock of deer until it had reached a limit which ensured an abundance of food for the stock that was left, a very marked improvement would become apparent at the end of ten years. Such a combination is extremely unlikely on geographical considerations alone. Nor is it likely that any one owner who regularly stalks his own ground will reduce his stock to such an extent that he will kill, say, ten stags where formerly he killed thirty or forty. Such forests are the only ones on which deer are likely to improve, for the stalker who takes a different forest every year naturally wants the best stags he can get for his money and reck little of his successor.

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There are very few, if any, forests where isolated experiments on these lines could be practised with any degree of success unless the entire forest was fenced, and this not only involves great expense, but renders the whole sport artificial to an exaggerated degree. Combined action seems out of the question for obvious reasons, so that the only thing to do is to make the best of conditions as they are.

This being so, another important question arises which is debated almost with the same heat as that of the deterioration of deer. I refer to artificial feeding.

The late Lord Lovat, who had very great knowledge of deer, gave it as his opinion that artificial feeding was a mistake, though he added the important proviso "unless absolutely necessary." There are very few forests nowadays in which it is not absolutely necessary. Scarcely a forest exists which is not overstocked with deer, and, as Mr. Millais has written, "it is sheer cruelty to maintain a large stock of deer without ensuring that they get an adequate supply of food during the winter months." It is an obvious truism that a given quantity of food will only support a certain limited amount of life. Consequently, a given area of ground will only support a certain given amount of stock, whether the stock consists of sheep, cattle, or deer. Any farmer knows that if he persistently overstocks his ground with animals, his policy is bound to end in disaster. Such a policy applied to deer forests shows concrete results in the bad heads grown by the stags, and the only corrective, apart from a drastic reduction in numbers, which, as I have endeavoured to show, is impossible on economic grounds, lies in some form of artificial feeding.

It has several great drawbacks. Deer which have been habitually accustomed to a supply of artificial food are in a bad way if the supply is suddenly discontinued. Many deer died from this cause during the War; and when Lord Burton gave up his long tenancy of Glenquoich hundreds of stags died in the following winter. They get out of the way of looking after themselves and perish of starvation.

Clover hay is the best food, but this is now expensive, and many proprietors and tenants give locust beans or maize. Another drawback lies in the fact that it is impossible to ensure that the right stag gets his share of the food. A greedy old switch will eat just as much as a promising young royal.

A forest owner of great experience wrote to me recently as follows: "I wish you would preach the value of mineral phosphates or basic slag on the best grass where deer *make* their horns. It seems elementary, but hardly a soul does it. On ground where basic slag was put ten years ago (and none since) you will find dense clover eaten as close as teeth will bite. To the right and left of it on the same soil there is no sign of clover, and deer take little interest in it. If you put £1 worth of corn down it is gone in a very



MEOBLE



AFFARIC



KINTAIL



BARRISDALE

SOME FIRST CLASS HEADS (2)

short time; but in the spring you can see the deer go over the best of the slag ground two or three times a day, until they seem to be eating the very earth, and it lasts for years."

There are some forests where the feeding is so good that to dress the ground in this manner seems superfluous—such forests being situated on the west coast, where the feeding is very rich—and other ground is so steep that the artificial manure gets washed down the hillsides, but I think it is a policy which might be adopted on a larger scale with great advantage to the deer.

Opponents of artificial feeding deny that it will make good heads, and up to a point they are correct. It will not make a bad head into a good one—the stag must be capable of growing a good head, and only a small percentage of stags are, in the happy phrase of Mr. Allan Gordon Cameron, "born to the purple"; but there is no doubt in my own mind that such feeding will enable a stag which is capable of growing a good head, to do so. It seems to me to be a matter of common sense. A stag after the severe strain put upon his constitution by the rut is mere skin and bone. He will lose two or three stones in weight in a few weeks, and if hard weather comes early in November, as it very often does, he never gets a chance of picking up and regaining his strength. Consequently, when the spring comes and he starts upon his period of horn growth, he is still in miserable condition. The result is that he grows a poor head. If, after the rut, he gets a supply of extra food which carries him through the winter and enables him to start growing his new horns when he is in good condition, it seems to me against all reason to suppose that he will not grow a better head than he would otherwise have done.

To take a case in point. At Glenkingie in 1923 a 14-pointer was noticed. In the following year he was only a 13-pointer, but had put on about 3 inches in length of horn and was thicker in the beam. His horns then measured 34 inches. In 1925 he was shot as a 15-pointer, and his horns measured 35½ inches, while the general improvement was as much marked over the preceding year as was that of 1924 over 1923. He was narrow in span, but that was a congenital defect which feeding would not have overcome. The real test, of course, would be to compare the head he would have grown had he not been fed with the head he did grow, but that, unfortunately, is always an impossibility in cases of this kind. That he would, however, have grown without any extra food, a head as good as that which he actually achieved I do not believe.

The eight heads illustrated are all remarkable, and though I do not say that any one is *the* best head ever killed in Scotland, I think it would be a difficult matter to pick out eight heads that would equal, let alone surpass them.

That of the 14-pointer from Ardverikie, for particulars of which I am indebted to Mr. Millais, is remarkable, not only for its great length and span, but for general shape and excellence. It was shot by Lord David Kennedy on the north face of Ben Alder, Ardverikie, September 1860. I am much indebted to Mr. Millais for allowing me to reproduce the photograph. Mr. Millais writes: "The head was one of the four largest ever killed at Ardverikie and was the only big head given away. The other three were destroyed by fire at Ardverikie. I think this is the largest purely wild forest head killed in Scotland in recent times, and personally I have never seen one larger in measurements or more perfect in shape." With this opinion I agree.

The royal from Guisachan is well known and is generally regarded as the best head killed in Scotland since 1875. It was shown at the 1913 Exhibition.

The 14-pointer killed by Roualeyn Gordon Cumming was, as I have already mentioned, sent to the Exhibition of British Deer Heads, 1913, by Mrs. Gordon Cumming. Unfortunately no information seems to be available as to where it was killed. In the chapter on poaching I have given the history of a stag which may possibly be that of this 14-pointer, but that is all one can say. All the points are perfect and very sharp. It unites great length, good beam and span, combined with symmetry and grace. As I have already remarked, I consider it personally, if not the best Scottish head I have ever seen, the head which I would sooner have killed than any I have ever come across. Even this is rash, for there is only one way by which such a statement can be decided. If the best dozen heads were brought back to life and standing undisturbed within a hundred yards of me and I had plenty of time to weigh the merits of each, I think this 14-pointer is the stag I should pick. For ever after I should be filled with the most terrible qualms that I had not killed the best, but that would be inevitable. It is impossible to make a comparison between two heads from memory, even though the measurements are known. This I learned by experience. A year or so ago I was dining with a well-known stalker together with the owner of a large forest, and naturally we talked "stags" all the evening. The rival merits of two of these very heads which I have illustrated came under discussion. The dispute waxed furious, till at length we decided the only way to settle the point was to get the two heads side by side. This, through the courtesy of the owners, we were enabled to do. One had more points than the other, and this was the head which I had determined in my own mind was the better of the two. The other head was superior in span; otherwise the measurements of the two were practically the same. When, however, the two were placed side by side I felt bound to retract my former opinion, as, though it was a very near thing, in general style—shape, thickness, points, etc.—the head with the smaller number of points outclassed the other. It taught me a lesson, and I have never since attempted to state which

was the better of two approximately equal heads unless they were together.

One day in 1921 I was in Inverness with Mr. Millais, and was following him into a shop when a car went by with a head on it which at once caught my eye. Only stopping to make certain that the car had come to a standstill, I rushed into the shop, dragged him out, and then and there in the street we examined Major Bell's 11-pointer from Affarie. It is probably the best head killed since the War, and though the right bay is missing and the horn tends to flatten at the tops, it is a wonderful trophy.

The 10-pointer killed by Mr. Young on Kintail in 1912 I regret to say I have never seen. It is, in the opinion of good judges, the best head ever killed there. One horn is shorter than the other, but that is almost the only criticism which can be made. Mr. Young has kindly allowed me to include a photograph of it.

Mr. Walter Jones' head from Meoble is the finest 9-pointer which I have ever seen and is first-class in every respect. Not only has it great length, but the span is extraordinary, and the horn is massive right up to the tops. I do not think that any other head which he secured during his long tenancy of Meoble and Morar can surpass it.

The 13-pointer killed by Colonel Baillie of Dochfour at Glenquoich is the best head killed there during Lord Burton's long tenancy. The brow points are perfect and the head is first-class in every respect.

The 14-pointer killed by Mr. A. S. Bowlby at Barrisdale is also first-class, of great beauty, fine shape, and almost perfect tops. It is the finest head I have seen from Barrisdale or Knoydart.

Many years ago, before the rise of modern deer-stalking, stalkers were discussing and arguing as to the deterioration of Scottish heads. I have already expressed my own views on the matter, and there is no need to reiterate them. It is interesting, however, to note the measurements of some of these much-vaunted trophies. Several were exhibited in the Exhibition of British Deer Heads of 1913, and details appear in the catalogue of measurements, where those interested in the matter can find them. The value of a trophy does not, fortunately, rest entirely on comparative values. I am fortunate in being able, through the kindness of Mrs. Tindal and Admiral Gerald St. John, R.N., to give details and photographs of the most famous Scottish head which has ever been killed, probably the most famous head ever killed, at any rate to the English-speaking world. I refer to the "Muckle Hart of Ben More," the narrative of whose death has become a classic through the magic of Charles St. John's pen.

It is a well-shaped head with thick horn, very good brow points 13 inches long, and is evidently that of an old stag. Beyond these facts it is not remarkable, and in these days it would be stretching a point to designate it

a first-class trophy, though conditions were very different when this hart, "of a light red colour," as Admiral St. John writes, and scaling 30 stones, in October 1833 attained, by its death, an immortality which many a stag with more imposing antlers has failed to share. A photograph of the "Muckle Hart" appeared in St. John's *Note Book*, but the measurements have never before been published, and will, I am sure, be of the greatest interest to all stalkers. My grateful thanks are due to Admiral St. John for his trouble in obtaining the measurements and for allowing me to include them in this chapter.

MEASUREMENTS OF HEADS OF WHICH PHOTOGRAPHS APPEAR.

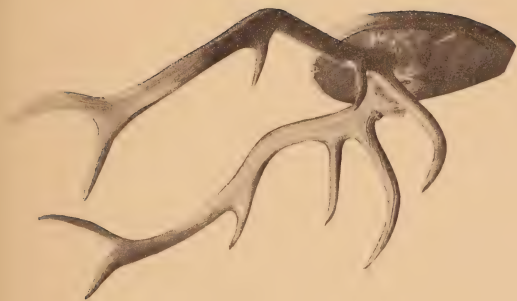
Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Date.	Owner.
Ardverikie	7+7	41	5	40	1860	Mr. J. G. Millais.
Guisachan	6+6	39	6	34	1880	Lord Tweedmouth.
Ben Dhronnaig (?)	7+7	38½	5½	30½	—	Hon. Mrs. Gordon Cumming.
Kintail	5+5	36½	5½	36½	1900	Mr. Young.
Meoble	5+4	36¼	4¾	35¼	1914	Mr. Walter Jones.
Affarie	6+5	36¼	5	29¾	1921	Major H. Bell.
Barridale	7+7	36	4¾	28	1898	Mr. A. S. Bowlby.
Glenquoich	7+6	36	5½	30½	1902	Colonel J. E. Baillie.
Ben More	5+5	32	4½	30	1833	Admiral St. John, R.N.
Novar	6+6	36½	5½	31½	1926	Mr. S. Martineau.
Wyvis	6+6	36½	4½	27½	1926	Mr. F. Wallace.

Owing to exigencies of space the photographs of the heads of red deer have had to be reproduced on a small scale. With the exception of those from Ardverikie and Kintail, the heads killed prior to 1913 have already appeared in my *British Deer Heads*, and other works.



(1)

THE MUCKLE HART OF BEN MORE
Killed by Charles St. John in 1833.



(2)

CHAPTER XXIII

THE IMPROVEMENT OF STAGS' HEADS

"There saw he hartes with his hornes hie,
The greatest that were ever seen with eie."

Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.

TWO most interesting and instructive experiments have been conducted in recent years in Scotland with a view to improving the heads of red deer; one with an individual stag and the other with a herd of deer. The first took place at Sandside, owned at the time by the late Mr. Thomas Pilkington; the other at Alvie, near Kingussie, by Mr. R. B. Whitehead. They both illustrate the development which the head of a Highland stag will attain under favourable conditions. I propose to give full details of these two cases, as they are of great value to the student of heads.

Sandside lies on the north coast of Scotland in the wild, bleak country of Caithness. Here there is but little natural shelter, and during bad winters deer are often hard put to it to keep alive. In 1907 an 11-pointer was noticed with a promising head. His shed horns were picked up, and on his making his appearance in the following year as a royal, Mr. Pilkington determined to entice him into an enclosure of about four hundred acres, where the remnants of a plantation afforded some kind of shelter. This plan was accordingly carried into effect in 1909. Two Warnham stags had been turned out some years earlier, but as this had been done in 1906 there is no doubt that he was entirely free from any strain of park blood. It is equally certain that he did not come from Langwell, the Duke of Portland's forest. In the enclosure he lived until 1912, when, as he seemed to show signs of going back (he was probably about twelve years old), he was killed as a 15-pointer. The stags at Sandside are given artificial food in the winter—locust beans and Indian corn—and a share of this food he had.

In 1907 the bay on the right horn was missing, that on the left being a knob. Next year he was a royal, with twelve good points. In 1909 he was a 13-pointer, with better and more fully developed points. In 1910 he carried eight good points on the right horn and six on the left, with fine, wild-looking tops. In 1911, instead of a cluster of points on the right top, he had three

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long, well-developed tines; while the left top was composed of two long points, and the back tine, which subdivided, making him a 13-pointer. The following table shows the development of this stag's horns:—

MEASUREMENTS OF SHED HORNS, SANDSIDE, 1912

(This stag was probably born *circa* 1900.)

		Length.	Brows.	Bays.	Trays.	Tops.	Girth between Brow and Bay.
1907	Right	26	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	—	7	5 $\frac{1}{2}$, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$, 2	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
	Left	26	6 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	6 $\frac{1}{4}$, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$, 1	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
1908	Right	30	8 $\frac{1}{4}$	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	8 $\frac{1}{4}$	8 $\frac{1}{2}$, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$, 4 $\frac{3}{4}$	3 $\frac{7}{8}$
	Left	29	8 $\frac{1}{8}$	6	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	5 $\frac{1}{2}$, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$, 6 $\frac{1}{8}$	4
1909	Right	34 $\frac{1}{2}$	9 $\frac{1}{2}$	6 $\frac{1}{2}$	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	11, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{1}{4}$
	Left	34 $\frac{1}{2}$	9	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	11	12 $\frac{1}{2}$, 9, 5	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
1910	Right	35 $\frac{1}{4}$	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	9 $\frac{1}{2}$	11	10 $\frac{1}{2}$, 7, 5, 5, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
	Left	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	10	10	12 $\frac{1}{2}$	13, 10, 6 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
1911	Right	38	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	13 $\frac{3}{4}$, 11, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$
	Left	36 $\frac{1}{2}$	11	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	12 $\frac{3}{4}$	12, 10, 3	4 $\frac{3}{4}$

I have made the following rough calculation as to the amount of new horn which was grown every year:—

		Trays and Tops.	Points.	
1907	Right	3 $\frac{1}{8}$	5	Aggregate of horn=92 in.
	Left	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	6	
1908	Right	3 $\frac{5}{8}$	6	Aggregate of horn=125 $\frac{1}{2}$ in., an addition of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in beam and 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in length on preceding year's growth.
	Left	3 $\frac{3}{4}$	6	
1909	Right	4	6	Aggregate of horn=147 in., an addition of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in beam and 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in length on preceding year's growth.
	Left	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	7	
1910	Right	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	8	Aggregate of horn=174 in., an addition of nothing in beam and 27 in. in length on preceding year's growth.
	Left	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	6	
1911	Right	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	6	Aggregate of horn=181 in., an addition of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in beam and 7 in. in length on preceding year's growth.
	Left	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	7	

		Length.	Brow Points.	Bay Points.	Tray Points.	Tops.	Beam between Bay and Tray.
1912	Right	39	11	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	12 $\frac{1}{2}$	14, 7, 9, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$	5
	Left	40	11	11	13	13, 8, 9, 4	5

		Beam between Tray and Tops.	Points.	Span over Tops.	Tip to Tip.	Span Inside.	Span Outside.	Widest Spread.	Weight.
1912	Right	5	8	15	23	34 $\frac{3}{4}$	38 $\frac{1}{2}$	43 $\frac{3}{4}$	23 st. 8 lb., with heart and liver.
	Left	5	7	14 $\frac{1}{4}$					

Aggregate of horn=191 in., an addition of $\frac{1}{4}$ in. in beam and 10 in. in length on preceding year's growth.



WYVIS, 1056.



NOVAR, 1026.

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There was a good deal of controversy about this head at the time, but the facts are as I have given them. A stag which has lived under the conditions which this animal enjoyed cannot fairly be classed, for purposes of comparison, with a stag which has lived an entirely free and unrestricted life; but this does not in any way detract from a valuable and interesting experiment, provided it is regarded in a proper light. The head is certainly one of the best which have ever been grown by a Scottish stag.

To turn now to Alvie. It lies at the foot of the Monadhliath range and was bought by Mr. Whitehead in 1906. He sold it eighteen years later. The deer ground extends to 6500 acres, of which 2500 acres are wood, chiefly fir, spruce, and larch, with a sprinkling of birch, which gave excellent shelter. No park blood was introduced, and at the time I visited the place the deer numbered three hundred, the sexes being about equally divided. In 1906 there was only one good stag on the ground, a 10-pointer with a good spread, the remaining stags carrying heads of six or seven points, with the usual admixture of switches and rubbish. Mr. Whitehead, having shot a great deal in Austria, determined to attempt the introduction of Continental methods of management.

The one great drawback which owners have to face when carrying out experiments of this kind in Scotland is that deer will wander. Consequently, unless their ground is very unusually situated, they run the risk of losing their best stags. To remedy this there is only one solution: the ground must be fenced, and a stag which spends his life in an enclosure, it may be of 30, 300, or 30,000 acres—the area makes no difference—has a stigma attached: he cannot be classed with an animal whose liberty is entirely unrestricted.

In a fenced forest the unnatural conditions under which sport exists in an inhabited country are emphasized to an extent which detracts enormously from its enjoyment. There always remains the unpleasant feeling at the back of one's mind that the animal which is being stalked cannot escape.

Two sides of the wood, therefore, at Alvie, roughly 3 miles long by $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles broad, were fenced. This was not a success. Towards the end of October one of the best stags was killed in the adjoining forest, and during the month of July, in one year, no less than twenty-eight stags were killed just outside the fence, while three were subsequently found dead inside the wood. After this exhibition of unsportsmanlike behaviour there was nothing left to do but fence the entire ground.

All switches, malformed heads, hummels, young stags which showed signs of carrying a bad type of head, and, in addition, all weedy looking hinds and calves, were killed. No healthy old hinds were destroyed, but yearlings and small beasts, the calf, if there was one, being killed first. The stock by this method was much reduced, and it was rare to see a stag with more than four or five hinds, instead of twenty or thirty, as was formerly the case. Of the

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150 stags ultimately left on the ground about half were over six years old, and between fifteen and twenty were killed annually, some of these being "rubbish."

The wood, which at this time was about forty years old, had become a refuge for all the decrepit deer on the range, and as those big stags which were on the ground made for Coignafearn in the rutting season, nothing but bad deer were left to take the hinds. The fencing, therefore, served a double purpose: it kept out the bad stags and kept in the good ones.

The lower end of the wood consisted of a big flat, and here all the big stags lived, working out to the open ground in the mornings and evenings towards the end of the rut. As a rule the younger stags lay out on the edge of the wood. Early in the season the big stags did not roar much, but, picking up their hinds, kept them in the wood. Some of them never moved into the open throughout the season.

The majority of the stags killed were shot actually in the wood. Such stalking is quite unlike hill-stalking in the open. It has a fascination all its own, and calls for great quickness and presence of mind on the part of the stalker. Platforms were erected at the edge of open glades inside the wood, and on these the sportsmen would at times sit and shoot the stags when they emerged from their retirement.

A certain amount of artificial food was given to the deer—clover hay in racks to avoid waste (with a few locust beans and turnips in the spring) being provided—immediately after the rut. It is then that stags are at their lowest, and if they can recover their condition before winter comes, they are in a much better state to withstand hard or wet weather. The hinds did not come to the feed. In consequence the stags came into condition earlier the following season and before the hinds. This prolonged the rut. The first roars were generally heard about the first week in September, and the older stags shed their horns by the first week in March, being clean by the middle of August. The results of such a policy as was carried out at Alvie must take about ten years to become apparent, for a stag is not at his best until twelve or thirteen.

However good the feeding and the conditions under which deer may live, it does not by any means follow that every stag will grow a good head. The essence of the matter must be in himself, and if his progenitors have a weakness they will certainly transmit it to him. Hence the necessity for eliminating animals which are likely to hand on their failings to their descendants. A stag is not likely to secure hinds before his horn growth is sufficiently developed for an observer to be able to notice whether he is going to grow a good or a bad type of head. If the latter, he can be removed before he has had a chance to perpetuate his shortcomings. It was regarded as an axiom in a good continental forest prior to the War that there should be a sufficient number

IMPROVEMENT OF STAGS' HEADS III

of fully developed stags to accommodate all the hinds without over-exertion on their part and without allowing the weak stags to participate. This means that for every fully developed stag there should be three or four hinds. The number of hinds which are frequently seen with a stag in Scotland would fill an Austrian stalker with consternation, for in his own country he might have been accustomed to see four or five stags roaring for the possession of one hind!

In the following table I give the measurements of some of the best heads which were secured at Alvie when the methods adopted had reached their full development. When they are studied and their origin considered, I think most students of horn growth will agree that Mr. Whitehead's experiment is one of the most interesting ever conducted in Scotland :—

Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Spread.	Tip to Tip.	Killed.
6+6	41 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{7}{8}$	30	35	14 $\frac{1}{4}$	1917 ¹
6+5	38	5 $\frac{1}{8}$	28 $\frac{3}{4}$	32 $\frac{1}{4}$	19 $\frac{1}{2}$	1918
8+8	33	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	28 $\frac{1}{2}$	30 $\frac{1}{2}$	11 $\frac{3}{4}$	1917

Though it is not to be supposed that the methods described will be generally followed, enough has been said to show that the elimination of bad stock, the maintenance of the correct proportion between the sexes and between young and old deer, and a proper discrimination as to the age at which a good stag is shot are the main factors to be considered in the development of good heads.

¹ Photographs of this head and shed horns for 1912, 1913 and 1916 appear on Plate facing p. 117.

CHAPTER XXIV

MEASUREMENTS OF HEADS KILLED IN RECENT YEARS

HAVING examined and measured many of the best heads which have been killed in Scotland during the past eighteen years, I have included the following tables for purposes of comparison:—

1908

Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Owner.	Remarks.
Kintail	11	$36\frac{1}{8}$	5	22	Mr. S. Loder	A head with beautiful tops and good horn, but falling off in the lower points.
Glenkingie	10	36	$5\frac{1}{2}$	$28\frac{3}{4}$	Mr. W. M. Christy	A very fine head, of good shape, thick horn and splendid tops. The bays were absent.
Eskadale	11	$35\frac{1}{4}$	5	$24\frac{3}{4}$	Major A. Robinson	A wood stag, with rough, massive horns, maintaining their weight throughout, the beam being 5 in. below the tops. The lower points are poor.
Knoydart	12	$35\frac{1}{4}$	5	25	Mr. A. S. Bowlby	An uneven head. The right horn lacks the bay and throws out its points very irregularly.
Fannich	10	$34\frac{1}{2}$	$4\frac{3}{4}$	$33\frac{3}{4}$	Mr. V. Watney	A fine wild head with 12-in. brows and good forks at the top, but falling off in the bays.
Ardnamurchan	12	$34\frac{1}{2}$	5	$31\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. C. D. Rudd	Probably a wood stag. The horns were rough, black, and of good quality. The top on the right horn was good, but the bays were poor.
Knoydart	10	$34\frac{1}{8}$	5	$31\frac{1}{2}$	Capt. H. V. S. Bowlby	A good rough horn and nice tops. The brows were poor and the bays almost entirely absent.
Arnisdale	12	$33\frac{1}{4}$	$4\frac{3}{4}$	$23\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. T. Drake	A head which would probably have improved with age. The horn is rough and of good quality, with fine tops, but poor bays.
Kintail	11	$32\frac{1}{2}$	$4\frac{3}{4}$	$24\frac{3}{4}$	Mr. S. Loder	A wild head, lacking the bay on the right horn.

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Locality.	Poina.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Owner.	Remarks.
Barrisdale	12	32 $\frac{1}{4}$	5 $\frac{1}{4}$	27	Mr. W. Parrott	A pretty head with thick, rough horns, carrying the weight well up.
Coulin	13	31 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{5}{8}$	24	Sir W. O. Dalgleish	A nice wild head, with all the points well defined. The horn is thick, but slightly weakens in the tops. The stag weighed 20 stone.
Killilan	12	30	4 $\frac{5}{8}$	26 $\frac{3}{4}$	Colonel Baldock	A pretty head with nice cups.

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Arran	12	36 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{5}{8}$	24 $\frac{3}{4}$	H.R.H. Prince Arthur of Connaught	A head with fine tops, good rough horn, and well-defined points. The left brow was slightly malformed. Prince Arthur killed three other stags on the same day, weighing respectively 23 st., 21 st. 7 lb., and 18 st. 9 lb.
N. Uist (Newton, Loch Maddy)	10	36	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	31	Mr. W. Brigstock	A wild-looking head with good horns. The left bay was good, but this point was missing on the right horn.

1909

Ardverikie	12	39 $\frac{3}{4}$	5	25	Mr. E. J. Wythes	A nice wild head, rather spoilt in appearance by the clumsy finish to the back point on the right top, and the smooth horn. Back tops, 16 in.
Wyvis	10	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	30 $\frac{1}{4}$	Mr. R. Shoolbred	A fine head with good rough horns, carrying their weight well up to the tops, which measured respectively 17 in. and 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. The brows were long. A "hoop" head coming in to 15 in. between tips.
Conaglen	10	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	—	Lord Morton	I have not seen this head.
Killilan	11	36 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	27 $\frac{1}{2}$	Colonel Baldock	A rough horn with good forks on each top. The last point was small.
Kintail	9	36	5	29	Mr. S. Loder	Brows, 12 in.
Loch Choire	10	35 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	31	Duke of Sutherland	A beautifully shaped head with good forks and all the points well defined.
Barrisdale	8	34 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	28	Mr. W. Parrott	A nice head with "facing" tops. The weight is carried well up and, indeed, the tops are heavier than the beam below the trays, but this does not detract from the appearance of the head.

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Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Owner.	Remarks.
Cluanie	12	34 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	25 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. A. H. Straker	An even, symmetrical head, with good rough horn, good tops, and the weight carried well up.
Cluanie	15	34 $\frac{1}{2}$	5	25 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. A. H. Straker	A wild head, and though slightly thicker than the royal, not so pleasing in appearance.
Strathvaich	11	34 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	25	Mr. P. D. Williams	A strong head with good forks, but poor brows.
Ardverikie	15	33 $\frac{3}{4}$	4	24 $\frac{1}{4}$	Mr. E. J. Wythes	A wild-looking head with points thin and sharp at the tips. The left top had short ugly points.
Barrisdale	13	33 $\frac{3}{4}$	5	25 $\frac{1}{4}$	Mr. W. Parrott	A well-shaped head with very thick, heavy brows and rough horn, but poor bays.
Langwell	12	33 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	28	Duke of Portland	A thick, massive head and rough horn, good lower points and heavy coronets, but ugly tops.
Glenkingie	13	33 $\frac{1}{2}$	—	—	Mr. W. Christie	I have not seen this head.
Knoydart	12	33	5	23 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. A. S. Bowlby	A rough horn with all the points good, and no weakening in the beam. The left bay was missing.
Barrisdale	10	33	5	28 $\frac{1}{4}$	Mr. W. Parrott	Good quality of horn and well-spreading brows which show the head off. Good tops, though the appearance of the right is spoilt by an attempt at division.
Lochmore	12	32	4	29 $\frac{1}{2}$	Duke of Westminster	A pretty head with good tops.

ISLAND HEADS

Isle of Rum	11	38 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	26	Sir George Bullough	A big head with nice tops and good quality of horn. One of the best ever killed here. Long bay on right.
Benmore, I. of Mull	11	36 $\frac{1}{2}$	5 $\frac{1}{4}$	30 $\frac{1}{4}$	Earl of Eglinton	A big, wild, irregular head with good tops. The right bay is missing. Brows, 12 in.
Sponish, N. Uist	12	35 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	26	Mr. C. H. Dendy	One of the prettiest heads of the season, though rather narrow. Rough horn, and all points sharp and well defined. Long back tops and good brows.

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Locality.	1910				Owner.	Remarks.
	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.		
Barrisdale	6+5	38½	5½	28½	Mr. W. Parrott	A splendid head with thick, rough horn, widely spreading brows, and all the points well defined. The best all-round head I saw this season.
Benklibreck	6+6	36½	5¼	25¾	Mr. J. W. Baxendale	A massive head, though somewhat uneven, the left horn being the better of the two.
Kintail	6+6	36½	4¾	23½	Mr. Sidney Loder	A rather narrow head coming in very much at the tops, with fairly thick horn.
Gaick	5+5	35¾	4¾	26	Mr. Guy Hargreaves	A head which began badly and finished magnificently. Good rough horn carrying the weight well up, with splendid tops. Back top, 14¾ in.
Craiganour	6+6	35½	4½	24¾	Mr. H. Samuelson	A nice head with good lower points, but thin all over. In a good season this head might have been first-class.
Barrisdale	5+5	35	5½	29½	Mr. W. Parrott	A heavy, massive head, the weight of horn being maintained throughout.
Ledgowan	4+4	35	4¾	29	Mr. L. A. Ballance	Thick, rough horn and good tops, though not quite symmetrical. I believe this is the best head shot at Ledgowan for some years.
Letterewe	5+6	34¼	5	29¼	Marquess of Zetland	A nice rough head with massive lower points and strong horn.
Barrisdale	4+4	34	4¾	30	Mr. W. Parrott	A nice wild head with big forks, good span, but short brows.
Fasnakyle	6+7	33¾	4⅝	24	Mr. S. Clarke	I have not seen this head.
Wyvis	5+5	32¾	4¾	32	Mr. R. Shoolbred	A pretty symmetrical head with long widely spreading brows, good trays, and big span.
Invercauld	5+5	32½	5	27½	Lord Hyde	A rough head with thick horn.
Knoidart	5+5	32½	4½	25¾	Rev. H. T. Bowlby	An even head with "facing" tops, good brows widely spread, rough horn, and all the points well defined.
Invergarry	2+3	32½	4¾	29½	Mr. Sydney Dennis	A very massive head, rather spoilt in appearance by a short bay on the right horn. Very rough and thick right up the length of horn.

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ISLAND HEAD

Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Owner.	Remarks.
Isle of Rum	6+7	34½	4½	27	Sir George Bullough	Good brows, the weight carried well up, and wild, twisted tops.
1912						
Kinveachy	10	39	4½	33	Major J. Porteous	This head probably came from Alvie.
Affaric	10	36¼	4½	27	Mr. Sydney Dennis	A fine wild head.
Strathvaich	10	36¼	4½	25½	Mr. P. D. Williams	A nice wild head with fine forks.
Strathvaich	10	36	4½	31¼	Mr. E. N. Crosfield	I have not seen this head, but killed on the same day, it was considered superior to the preceding one.
Knoydart	10	35½	4	31¼	Mr. A. S. Bowlby	A graceful wide head with beautiful forks marred by a short tray on the left horn. Another uneven 10-pointer (6 + 4) ran this head close.
Ardnamurchan	12	35½	4½	27¾	Mr. Donaldson Hudson	A rough, massive, symmetrical head with good tops.
Morar	11	35¾	4¾	27	Mr. W. A. Dewhurst	I have not seen this head.
Glenfeshie	14	35¼	—	27¾	Sir G. A. Cooper	A fine head.
Glenfinnan	10	35¼	5½	26¼	Mr. I. H. Holden	A beautiful massive head with well-developed points, strong, rough horns, and good lower points.
Achnacarry	12	34	5	26½	Mr. J. C. Kennedy	A very nice royal.
Knoydart	8	34	4½	29½	Mr. A. S. Bowlby	Exactly the same type of head as the 10-pointer.
Loch Rosque	12	33½	4½	29¼	Sir A. Bignold	A good head, with a nice cup on the left horn.
Forest Lodge	11	33½	5	24¾	Lieut.-Col. H. Kays	Fine rough black horns of the old wild type, with very heavy tray points.
Kintail	12	31¼	6½	30	Mr. Sydney Loder	I have not seen this head, but the beam is quite unusual.
Braemore	10	30¼	—	37½	Captain Higson	I have not seen this head.
Killilan	17	29½	4¾	29	Mr. R. H. Benson	Fourteen of the points are normal: two on the right top are very small, and one emanates from the posterior of the main beam behind the bay on the left horn. The right bay is very short, and the coronets slight. The brows are very good and the horn rough. Evidently an old stag.



ALVIE

Illustrating the improvement of growth in successive years.



STRATHCONAN, 1912

MEASUREMENTS OF HEADS 117

1912

Some very remarkable heads were killed this year at Strathconan by Captain C. Combe. Taken all round, they are the best group I have ever seen killed by one rifle, from one forest in a season.

	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Remarks.
1.	6+4	38	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	25 $\frac{1}{2}$	A head of unusual length. Right top inclined to palmation.
2.	5+6	36 $\frac{1}{2}$	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	23	A massive head.
3.	6+6	35 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	25 $\frac{3}{4}$	Good shape and very good "cup" tops. Poor bays.
4.	6+6	34 $\frac{1}{2}$	5	25 $\frac{1}{4}$	Wild tops. Poor bays.
5.	5+6	34	5	23	This stag was known for some years and always missed the right bay. Particularly good heavy tops.
6.	6+6	33 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	26 $\frac{1}{4}$	Very fine lower points.

The numbers refer to the illustration of these heads on the Plate facing this page.

1913

Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Owner.	Remarks.
Barrisdale	4+4	37	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	35 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. W. Parrot	A strong, rough head.
Lettermorar	5+4	37	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	30	Mr. W. A. Dewhurst	A head combining length, beam, and span.
Cluanie	6+5	36 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	25 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. H. A. Straker	A graceful, wild head with good tops, strong horn, and long points. Weight, 16 st. 11 lb.
Glenfinnan	2+2	36	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	27	Mr. F. Fenwick	A splendid switch. The left horn the better of the two. Evidently an old stag. Weight, 19 st. 10 lb.
Affarie	5+5	35 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	32 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. L. A. Ballance	A head of fine shape and good tops. A marked falling off in the brows.
Garrygualach	6+5	35 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	29 $\frac{1}{4}$	Major H. G. Fenton Newall	A big, wild head with fine tops and good span. There is a falling off in the brows.
Braulen	5+5	35 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	27	Earl of Derby	A symmetrical head with fine forks, the right being particularly good. The horn is rough. The brows and right bay show signs of weakening.
The Black Mount	6+6	35 $\frac{1}{4}$	5 $\frac{1}{4}$	27 $\frac{1}{4}$	Countess of Sefton	A strong, wild head with rough, thick horns. The right is perfect. Left bay missing.
Knoydart	6+6	35	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	29 $\frac{3}{4}$	Mr. A. S. Bowlby	A fine wild head, of good shape, and all the points long. An old stag.
Fasnakyle	6+5	34	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	28 $\frac{7}{8}$	Lieut.-Colonel R. S. Clarke	A strong, rough head, with splendid lower points.

DEER-STALKING

Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Owner.	Remarks.
Cluanie	5+5	34	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	29	Mr. A. H. Straker	A graceful head, of good shape, with long points. Weight, 17 st. 21 lb.
Cluanie	6+7	34	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	22 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. A. H. Straker	A head with heavy tops, but falling off in the lower points.

ISLAND HEADS

Langass, N. Uist	6+6	32 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	28	Major Anstruther Gray, M.P.	A graceful, symmetrical head, with very good lower points and strong horn.
Sponish, N. Uist	7+7	31	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	25 $\frac{1}{4}$	Mr. J. L. Venables	A head typically Irish, with double-forked tops. Good shape, but rather smooth horn.

1917

Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span (inside).	Shot by.	Remarks.
Kintail	4+4	38 $\frac{1}{4}$	5 $\frac{1}{8}$	32 $\frac{3}{4}$	Mr. Sydney Loder	A head of very good wild shape, great beam, and rough horn. One point on the left top is rather weak.

1918

Ben More, Assynt	5+4	37 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	29 $\frac{3}{4}$	Lieutenant Miller	A head of beautiful wild shape, with magnificent back tops.
Struy	7+7	34 $\frac{7}{8}$	4 $\frac{3}{8}$	26 $\frac{3}{4}$	Colonel R. C. Swan	A head of fine shape, with very long back points. The right bay and one point on right top are weak.

1919

Knoydart	6+6	35 $\frac{3}{4}$	6	26 $\frac{1}{4}$	Mr. A. S. Bowlby	A very strong, rough head, carrying the beam all the way up. The colour of the horn was like a wood stag's.
Glenquoich	4+5	35	—	32	Mr. C. Williams	40 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. outside spread, three points on left top.
Ben More, Assynt	6+6	33 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	32 $\frac{3}{4}$	Mr. Jack Soames	A good head of fine shape.

ISLAND HEADS

Langass, L. Maddy	6+6	33 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	30 $\frac{1}{4}$	Major Anstruther Gray	
Langass, L. Maddy	7+7	33 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	27 $\frac{1}{2}$	Major Anstruther Gray	Nearly another point on left top. A wild head of good shape.

1920

Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Owner.	Remarks.
Arisaig	5+6	35 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{3}{8}$	24 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. W. Rolls	Misses bays.
Glenquoich	6+6	33 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{3}{8}$	31 $\frac{1}{4}$	Mr. C. Williams	I have not seen this head.
Portclair, Glen- moriston	5+5	33 $\frac{3}{4}$	5	27 $\frac{3}{8}$	Captain P. Grant	A fine symmetrical head.
Glendessary	6+6	32 $\frac{1}{2}$	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	25 $\frac{3}{8}$	Lord Belper	Misses bays; good horn.
Ledgowan	6+5	32 $\frac{1}{2}$	5	28 $\frac{3}{8}$	Mr. H. G. Barclay	A very good head, with thick, rough horns, 14 in. brows. Right top palmated. Misses bays; good horn.

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ISLAND HEAD

Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Owner.
Langass, N. Uist	6+7	32 $\frac{3}{4}$	4	24	Major Anstruther Gray

Remarks.
Misses right bay.

1921

Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span (Inside).	Owner.
Affarie	5+6	36 $\frac{1}{4}$	5	29 $\frac{3}{4}$	Major H. Bell

Remarks.
Spread, 36 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. A magnificent head which would have been quite first-class even in pre-war days. Of beautiful shape, well balanced, thick, rough horn, splendid tops, and very long brow points, the only weak point is the short bay on the left horn. The right bay is missing. So far as "style" goes, it is the best head I have seen for years.

Glenquoich	6+5	35 $\frac{3}{4}$	5	31 $\frac{1}{4}$	Mr. C. Williams
Fasnakyle	7+7	35 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	23	Lt.-Col. Stephenson Clarke
Glenfeshie	6+7	35 $\frac{1}{2}$	5 $\frac{3}{8}$	25 $\frac{1}{2}$	Captain D. Gunston
Wyvis	6+6	34 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	25	Lt.-Colonel Shoolbred
Patt	7+7	34 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{3}{8}$	22 $\frac{1}{4}$	Colonel Oliver Haig
Meoble	5+6	34	4 $\frac{1}{8}$	28 $\frac{3}{4}$	Sir Berkeley Sheffield
Glendessary	4+5	34	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	30 $\frac{1}{2}$	Lord Belper
Garrygualach	5+6	34	4	31 $\frac{3}{4}$	Mr. A. Schwerdt
Glencarron	5+4	32 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	21 $\frac{1}{2}$	Sir Leslie Garton
Stratheonan	5+6	32	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	22 $\frac{1}{2}$	Captain C. Combe
Killilan	6+6	32	4 $\frac{3}{8}$	27	Mr. H. F. Wallace
Braulen	5+4	31 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	29 $\frac{1}{2}$	Sir John Dewrance
Langwell	7+7	31	5	30 $\frac{3}{4}$	Duke of Portland
N. Cluanie	6+5	31	5	24 $\frac{3}{4}$	Captain Webster

Spread, 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Misses left bay. I have not seen this head.

Spread, 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. I have not seen this head. I have not seen this head, and am indebted to Messrs. Rowland Ward for the measurements.

A head of beautiful shape and rough horn.

Though narrow, wild in shape, with nice trays and tops.

Very good tops and 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. brows. Right bay missing.

A head of good shape.

A well-shaped wild head, with thick, rough horn.

Good spread and good brows and tops.

A wild, massive head, carrying the weight well up and finishing in nice tops.

The left bay is weak. A head of nice shape.

Beautiful shape and fine horn.

Misses bays, and the brows are rather short. A good strong, wild head.

Strong, rough horns tending to palmation at the tops.

Brows, 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Right bay weak. Strong horn, and one of the best shaped heads I saw.

DEER-STALKING

ISLAND HEADS

Locality	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span (Inside).	Owner.	Remarks.
Jura	7+6	36 $\frac{3}{8}$	5 $\frac{3}{8}$	32 $\frac{3}{4}$	Capt. C. G. Campbell	Spread, 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. I have not seen these heads.
Jura	6+5	36 $\frac{1}{8}$	4 $\frac{9}{16}$	29 $\frac{3}{4}$	Capt. C. G. Campbell	Spread, 35 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.
Jura	7+5	31	4 $\frac{7}{8}$	29 $\frac{1}{4}$	Capt. C. G. Campbell	Spread, 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Five points on right top.
1922						
Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Owner.	Remarks.
Knoydart	5+6	37	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	28	Mr. A. S. Bowlby	Four points on left top, with a small excrescence which might have been a point. Good shape, and the right top very fine. Evidently a very old stag.
The Blackmount	6+6	36	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	28 $\frac{5}{8}$	Earl of Durham	I have not seen this head.
Glenquoich	3+3	35 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{3}{8}$	30 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. C. Williams	I have not seen this head.
Glenavon	5+5	35 $\frac{1}{8}$	4 $\frac{3}{8}$	31 $\frac{1}{8}$	Sir Ian Walker	I have not seen this head.
Braulen	5+4	34 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	31 $\frac{1}{4}$	Mr. H. Weld-Blundell	A nice wild head, rather spoilt by the straight brows.
Caenlochan	5+5	34 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{3}{8}$	27 $\frac{1}{2}$	Major S. J. Green	I have not seen this head.
Fannich	6+6	34 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{9}{16}$	28 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. O. Watney	I have not seen this head.
Glenfiddich	5+5	34	5	30	Mr. R. H. McCurdy	A very pretty head, with good tops and strong horn. Bays weak.
Kingairloch	5+6	33 $\frac{7}{8}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	27 $\frac{3}{8}$	Lieut.-Colonel G. A. Strutt	I have not seen this head.
Strontian	5+5	33 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	28 $\frac{3}{8}$	Captain J. Hamilton Leigh	A beautiful head of good shape, with very graceful wild tops. The only blemish is a rather weak point on the left top.
Glenfeshie	7+6	33 $\frac{5}{8}$	5	25 $\frac{3}{4}$	Colonel Curre	A strong, rough, wild head, rather marred by the brows.
Affarie	5+6	33 $\frac{7}{8}$	3 $\frac{7}{8}$	27	Lord Furness	Rather spoilt by the thin horn and poor lower points.
Mamore	5+5	33 $\frac{1}{2}$	4	26 $\frac{1}{2}$	Captain F. Bibby	Pretty shape and good tops. Brows, 11 in.
Guisachan	5+6	33 $\frac{1}{2}$	5	27	Mr. F. N. Bell	A strong, rough, wild head of good type.
Affarie	2+2	33 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{3}{8}$	35 $\frac{3}{4}$	Captain Dugdale	Thick horn and remarkable span. A handsome head. There is a short point on the left top.
Langwell	6+7	33	4 $\frac{3}{8}$	24	Duke of Portland	A fine head with thick horn.
Glenfiddich	6+4	33	4 $\frac{3}{8}$	29	Mr. R. Cumming	Strong horn, but rather weak in the lower points.
Killilan	6+4	33	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	29	Mr. E. M. Wills	A very pretty wild head. Nice tops.
Benmore (Assynt)	5+4	32	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	33 $\frac{1}{2}$	Sir C. Ross	A strong, wild head.
Garrygualach	7+7	30	4	25	Mr. C. F. G. R. Schwerdt	A very symmetrical, pretty head. The lower points are rather short.

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ISLAND HEADS

Locality.	Points	Length	Beam	Span.	Owner.	Remarks
Glenforsa (Mull)	5+5	32½	4½	27¼	Captain Macleod of Cadboll	A very pretty head with strong, rough horn.
1923						
Braulen	3+3	38	4½	29½	Capt. R. E. Trevithick	A wild head of unusual length.
The Blackmount	6+6	37¾	4½	22¾	Brig.-General Hon. C. Lambton	I have not seen this head.
Corrour	5+5	37	5	21½	Mr. P. Fleming	Very good tops and good horn, but weak brows.
Glenfiddich	4+4	36	4½	26	Mr. R. H. McCurdy	A very symmetrical head. 7 in. tip to tip.
Glenkingie	6+5	35½	4½	32½	Lord Belper	A well-proportioned head of beautiful shape. Left bay missing. Brows, 12 in., 11½ in.
Benalder	6+5	35½	4¾	22½	Mrs. Gordon	Very fine tops and good thick horn. 6¼ in. tip to tip.
Knoydart	7+5	35	4¾	28	Mr. A. S. Bowlby	Rather smooth, thin horn. Nice wild tops.
Glenfeshie	5+5	35	4½	29	Mr. W. A. Bromet	I have not seen this head.
Loch Luichart	6+5	34½	4¾	23	Marquis of Northampton	Nice tops. Very weak brows.
N. Cluanie	5+5	34¼	5	29¼	Major N. G. Frank	A wild head of beautiful shape and rough horn. All the points are good, with the exception of weak bays.
Coignafearn	6+5	34	4¾	30	Colonel McFarlane	Left bay, 11½ in.
Knoydart	6+7	33¾	5	28½	Miss Audrey Colvin	Good strong horn. Weak bays.
Strathconan	6+5	33½	5	35½	Captain C. Combe	A strong, wild head of remarkable span. Left bay broken; 38 in. outside span.
Strathconan	5+5	33½	4½	30	Captain C. Combe	Beautiful tops. A weak bay on the left horn.
Glenfiddich	5+5	33	5	27	Mr. R. H. McCurdy	A strong, rough head. A weak point on right top.
Glenquoich	5+5	32½	4½	33	Mr. C. Williams	I have not seen this head.
N. Benula	5+4	32	4¾	30¼	Dr. Leggatt	A nice even head, missing the left bay. Good horn and nice tops.
Craig	6+6	32	4½	28¾	Mrs. L. Garton	Long, thin horn. No trays.
Patt	6+7	31½	5	—	Colonel O. Haig	An old stag.
S. Benula	7+7	29¼	4½	21	Captain N. Davis	The right horn is malformed, the pedicle being twisted forwards. The left horn is very good.
						One point is really an offer. Misses right bay. Left tray double, which is unusual. Poor brows. An attractive wild head, with strong black horn.

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ISLAND HEADS

Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Owner.	Remarks.
Skye	5+5	33 $\frac{1}{2}$	5	25	Mr. J. Stewart Watson	A symmetrical head with strong, rough horn.
Jura	6+7	32	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	22	Mr. J. Lithgow	Rather straight and narrow but good points, and good tops.

1924

The Barracks	5+6	38 $\frac{1}{2}$	5	29 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mrs. Rawnsley	I have not seen this head.
Corrour	4+4	36 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	30 $\frac{1}{4}$	Mr. H. C. Phipps	Strong horn and heavy tops. Long points. The best-looking head I saw this year.
Langwell	6+6	36	5 $\frac{1}{8}$	30 $\frac{1}{2}$	Duke of Portland	I have not seen this head.
Glenquoich	9	36	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	—	Mr. C. Williams	I have not seen this head.
Strontian	6+5	36	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	24	Col. Hamilton Leigh	I have not seen this head. Brows, 14 in. and 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
Strathconan	6+4	36	5	27	Major Combe	A massive head, with good horn and nice tops.
Achnacarry	4+5	35 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	26 $\frac{1}{2}$	Major Birkin	Very good brows, 12 in.
Tombuie	5+5	35 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	25 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. J. K. Hutchison	I have not seen this head.
Glenquoich	11	35	—	34	Mr. C. Williams	I have not seen this head.
Glenetive	5+5	35	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	30 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mr. Ian T. Nelson	A very symmetrical, well-balanced head and good points.
Glen carron	6+6	34 $\frac{1}{4}$	4	25 $\frac{3}{4}$	Lady E. Cobbold	I have not seen this head.
Tulchan	6+5	34 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	27	Mr. H. E. Christie	I have not seen this head.
Strathconan	4+5	34 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	27	Captain Combe	A nice wild head.
Achdaluie	6+6	34	5	30	Mr. H. J. Parsons	Short, irregular points. Does not live up to its capabilities.
Tombuie	6+4	34	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Mr. J. K. Hutchison	I have not seen this head.
Glenfalloch	4+5	33 $\frac{3}{4}$	5	30	Mr. C. H. Christie	I have not seen this head.
Glenkingie	5+5	33 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	29	Lord Belper	A very even head, with good lower points. Good shape.
Coignafearn	6+6	33	4 $\frac{5}{8}$	24	Mr. J. K. Hutchison	I have not seen this head.
Farley	7+6	32 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	22	Dr. Leggatt	A narrow head, with nice tops.
Glenkingie	6+6	32	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	29 $\frac{1}{4}$	Lord Belper	Nice horn. Lower points good, but rather short tops.
Glenmazeran	6+5	32	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	28	Mrs. Higson	A pretty head, with good lower points and nice horn.
Coignafearn	6+6	32	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	22	Captain S. Graham	All points good and long tops. No cups, and 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. from lower point of tops to fork.

1925

Wyvis	6+6	36 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{7}{8}$	28	Lt.-Col. Shoolbred	A first-class head with beautiful tops, thick horn, and fine shape (No. 1). Certainly one of the best heads killed since the war.
Glenfeshie	5+5	36 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	30	Mr. H. Nichols	I have not seen this head.

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Locality.	Points	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Owner.	Remarks.
Wyvis	6+6	36	5½	28½	Lt.-Col. Shoolbred	Only slightly inferior to the other head from Wyvis, but not so beautiful in shape (No. 2). (This is the stag of which I give an account in the next chapter.)
Glenkingie	7+8	35	4½	23¼	Lord Belper	A beautiful head, marred only by the narrow span. All the points are good, particularly the lower ones. Good quality horn. Brows, 12 in.
Coignafearn	4+5	35	4¾	28	Mr. A. R. Nall-Cain	A nice wild head. The right top particularly good.
Arnisdale	5+5	35	4¾	30	Mr. E. Hopwood	A very nice head which must have looked well in life. Short point left top, the horn of which is flat.
Monar	5+5	34	4¾	23½	Captain J. Stirling	A nice head, marred by the narrow span.
Gaick	5+5	33½	5¼	28½	Mr. J. Hargreaves	Misses left bay. Strong horn and very good tops.
Ceannacroch	6+7	33½	4½	29½	Lady Warrender	A good head, with long horns and nice tops, but short bay points.
Guisachan	6+6	33¾	5¼	25¾	Sir Stephenson Kent	I have not seen this head.
Strathconan	7+7	33	4½	26½	Captain C. Combe	A well-shaped head, with good tops.
Fasnakyle	5+5	32½	5	28½	Colonel S. Clarke	A pretty head, with long tops and a good horn.
Barrisdale	6+6	32¼	4½	26½	Mr. Guthrie Watson	Four on each top and missing bays. Long horns. Very short trays and a short point on the right top. The left top is very prettily shaped, but has flat horn.
Farley	5+5	32¼	4½	31¼	Dr. Leggatt	Evidently an old stag. A very even head and smooth horn.
Coignafearn	5+6	32	4¾	34	Mr. A. R. Nall-Cain	A good-looking head, with a fine sweep of horn. Good lower points, 11½ in. brows. It might be called a royal.
Affarie	6+6	32	4½	25¼	Lord Furness	The right horn is better than the left.
Glenkindie	7+7	31¼	4½	27¼	Major Ropner	Brows, 13 in. I have not seen this head.
Glentanar	5+5	31	5¼	28½	Lord Glentanar	A very wild head with thick, rough horn and good shape.
Glenkingie	6+6	30¼	5½	23½	Mr. H. F. Wallace	A wild-looking head, remarkable for its massive horn.
Braulen	6+6	30¼	5¼	24	Sir J. Dewrance	A nice royal with good horn.
Caenlochan	8+8	29½	4½	20½	Major-Gen. Sir Colin Mackenzie	I have not seen this head.

DEER-STALKING

ISLAND HEAD

Locality.	Points.	Length.	Beam.	Span.	Owner.	Remarks.
Jura	6+6	34½	5½	27¾	Capt. C. G. Campbell	Brows, 13½ in. I have not seen this head.

1926

Alvie	5+5	37½	4½	29½	Colonel Dennistoun	12-in. brows. All points good. A wild head of great length and good shape.
Novar	6+6	36½	5½	31¾	Mr. S. Martineau	A magnificent head without a single weak characteristic, and combining all the qualifications necessary for a first-class trophy.
Wyvis	6+6	36½	4½	27½	Mr. H. F. Wallace	A beautiful head, graceful, finely shaped, and well proportioned, with splendid tops, though one point on the left top is rather short.
Strathconan	7+7	36	4¾	31	Captain C. Combe	Very good lower points. Good shape. Good tops, though it would have been better as a royal.
Barrisdale	5+5	35¼	4½	26½	Mr. Smith-Ryland	I have not seen this head.
Glenquoich	5+6	35½	4¾	27¾	Mr. C. Williams	I have not seen this head.
Killiechonate	4+4	35	4½	35¾	Colonel W. Heywood Lonsdale	I have not seen this head.
Monar	5+5	34¾	4¾	34	Captain James Stirling	A beautiful head. Fine shape. Very good lower points. The right horn is the better shape.
Langwell	6+5	34½	4½	30	Duke of Portland	A good head combining length and span.
Wyvis	5+5	34	4¾	26½	Colonel R. Shoolbred	A strong head which would have been first-class if both horns had been equal.
Glenkingie	6+7	33¾	4½	24½	Lord Belper	A white stag. A fine wild-looking head. Good lower points and nice tops.
Monar	7+6	33¾	4½	26¼	Captain John Stirling	The lower points are inclined to be weak, but a fine head.
Fannich	5+7	32½	5	27¾	Mr. O. V. Watney	I have not seen this head.
Glenkingie	6+6	33½	4¾	27	Lord Belper	A strong head of good shape. The right top is the better of the two.
Pait	6+6	32½	4½	27	Major Loder	The left top is rather weak.
Barrisdale	6+7	31¾	4½	21½	Mr. Smith-Ryland	I have not seen this head.
Coignafearn	8+8	28½	4½	19½	Mr. Latilla	I have not seen this head.

ISLAND HEAD

Ben More (Isle of Mull)	7+6	30½	4½	26	Mr. A. M. Lees-Milne	Short bays. Good brows and nice horn.
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PANIC !



A WARNHAM HEAD

CHAPTER XXV

ABNORMALITIES AND ACCIDENTS AMONG DEER

"Hartes bear their heads in divers sortes and maners. Some well growne, some others yll growne."—GEORGE TURBERVILLE.

MALFORMED heads are not uncommon among red deer and are seldom beautiful. They may be divided into two classes: (1) Permanent. (2) Temporary. The former are either constitutional, in which case they are capable of transmission, or arise either from an injury to the body, or to the pedicle from which the horn grows; the latter from some injury to the horn itself while it is still in the velvet and soft.

An injury to the pedicle usually results in one or more short, twisted horns. Three-horned stags with true coronets are rare. Mr. Douglas Barry, who was for many years the tenant of Struy, at the foot of Glen Strathfarrar, killed one in 1893. The third horn of this stag is longer than those usually found in such cases. Another three-horned stag was shot at Kinlochewe in 1925. Lord Alexander Paget wrote that a stag with four horns and three distinct coronets "was seen on Sept. 25th, Sept. 28th and stalked this day, Sept. 30th, by myself but without getting a shot." This was in 1868. The stag was seen, stalked ten days later in Coulin and missed, and on the day following was spied crossing the west ground of Strathconan. In 1908 a four-horned stag was seen in Strathconan and was shot two years later.

A three-horned stag "with a small spurious antler with a pedicle, coronet, and what may perhaps be regarded as a rudimentary brow tine" was mentioned in the *Field* in 1905. The third horn grew behind the normal pair, in the middle line of the skull, not, as is usually the case, at the side of one of the pedicles. The account in the *Field* is confusing, as it states that "This supplemental antler is situated on the inter-parietal bone, to which, however, it has no attachment, having been apparently supported during life merely by the skin." This being so, it is difficult to see how the horn could grow from a pedicle.

One forest owner tells me that he has more than once shot stags with cancerous horns. A large swelling appears above the bay or brow point which enlarges and eventually the horn drops off.

A very remarkable instance of a bony growth on the horn of a stag was shown in the *Field* in the issue of October 7th, 1922. The stag which carried it was shot by Captain Bullough in Glen Lyon :—

“ While both antlers are fairly well grown, the right one is almost a switch, while the left carries four points. Viewed from behind, the left antler shows an enormous deposit of bony growth, commencing from the very base or coronet of the horn, and continuing in irregular masses of a beehive shape, gradually becoming smaller towards the tip of the horn. When this head was received the right horn was clear of velvet, but on the left side the velvet was still adherent to the new growth, and it was only after a very long time, and after great difficulty, that all this velvet was removed, especially from the large dark mass. This remained rather soft and very vascular. It is very difficult to account for such a large, abnormal growth of horny deposit on an antler as this. The explanation may be, and probably is, that very early in the growth of the horn it sustained an injury close to the coronet, setting up some inflammation in the course of one of the larger nutrient arteries supplying the velvet, and that this inflammation extended to the new growth of bone around and in the course of that artery, so causing an increased supply of bony material to be deposited along its course from the blood vessels which supply the interior of the growing horn. It is difficult to account for this remarkable growth in any other way. The pedicle or bony protuberance of the frontal bone from which the antlers grow is at the period of their growth very highly supplied with blood vessels, especially towards the centre, and, according to Professor Macewen, from these vessels an active osseous or bony proliferation takes place. The inter-communication or anastomosis between the small branches of these vessels and the small branches of the nutrient arteries of the velvet is not well marked, but they do communicate with each other to some extent, and it is easy to understand that if there is an inflammatory condition of the vessels of the velvet there would be a corresponding tendency of the blood vessels from the interior of the horn to bring an increased blood supply to the inflamed spot and so to produce a largely increased supply of bony material along the course of the artery, which was what probably occurred in this instance. This specimen is now in the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, in Lincoln's Inn Fields.”

By far the most remarkable malformed head which has ever come under my notice is that of a stag shot in 1924 at Killiechonate by Lieut.-Colonel Bell. This head, in addition to carrying a normal, rather short pair of horns with eight points, had growing out of the exterior base of each pedicle another pair of horns projecting at right angles to the axial line of the face. They were apparently constitutional and not due to any injury, in which case they were capable of transmission to the animal's descendants.

Stags with horns growing down the side of the face, which render feeding

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difficult, are common. I have shot such heads myself, and photographs are often seen of these freaks.

A stag which was killed at Glenquoich had a horn which turned round quite loosely, as if in a socket, and a similar malform was shot in the island of Skye in 1902; while in 1919 Major Wilkin shot a stag at Wyvis with a horn of a somewhat similar nature. This animal had no tail!

At Braulen a stag was killed in 1923 with a good head of eleven points and thick, strong horns. When it was being gralloched one of the horns came away in the hand of the stalker, and, in the larder, the second horn came off in a similar manner. This stag had no testicles. Injury to these organs usually results in malformation of some kind to the horns, but it is remarkable that this animal should have grown, apparently, normal horns of good type. It is a pity that no details were given in the account published with regard to the condition of the pedicles or skull. Stags occasionally throw out a point from the posterior edge of the main beam, though such cases are rare in wild deer. In park stags such a growth tends to increase in size and may eventually bifurcate. I have seen three or four wild stags with points of this nature, though never, so far as I remember, with a bifurcation. Three have been killed at Knoydart with points of this description. Miss Wills in 1925 at Killilan shot a curious head with blunt points of horn growing from the lower edge of each of the main beams below the tray points. I have never seen another head growing similar points.

Malformed heads are generally very irregular, but a stag shot at Cluanie in 1912 by Mr. A. H. Straker, who was killed in a hunting accident in 1925, carried a good head of six points with strong, rough, rather flat horns and good brows. The horns grew straight up, parallel to the axial line of the skull, which was quite normal. The tip to tip measurement was only 7 inches.

It usually happens that when a stag has been wounded and escaped, the horn on the side *opposite* to that on which the wound is situated will suffer. At Glenkinglas in 1925 Mr. Balfour Browne shot a stag with traces of an old wound in the right foreleg, but in this case it was the right horn which had deteriorated.

Occasionally, though not often, a stag will grow an extra point between the bay and the tray; I shot a head of this kind in New Zealand. Usually any extra points will be found on one or other of the tops.

Stags' horns vary very much in character, from the rough black horn which it is the ambition of every stalker to possess, to the thin smooth growth ending in weak, easily broken tops, which look like diseased bone. Heredity is the basic factor in the growth of good horn, modified by food and environment; but a stag which springs from bad stock will never grow a really good head even though living under the best conditions.

As a matter of passing interest it may be mentioned that stags' horns

which prior to 1914 fetched 8d. per lb., now average about half that amount. They used nearly all to go to Austria, where, I believe, they were transformed into knife handles and such-like objects.

By far the most common type of abnormality is the "switch." The true switch has no points at all, but merely the main beams, and not even brow points. The Gaelic term for these heads is "Caberslach," rod heads. Such heads are, fortunately, rare, as they are peculiarly ugly. A good strong switch with long horns and good brow points is a very handsome trophy. One of the best I have ever seen was killed at Glenfinnan in 1913 by Mr. F. Fenwick. The length of horn was 36 inches, and the beast weighed 19 st. 10 lb. Attractive though a good switch is, they are bad brutes to have in a forest, as they will usually win in a fight and drive off younger deer with good heads.

Another type of abnormality is the "hummel" stag. The term is derived from a German word meaning "hornless." He carries no horns at all and is an even more successful fighter than the switch. Horned stags always fight head to head, but a hummel will go for the flank or side of his opponent and deliver a smashing, knock-out body blow. I should perhaps add that both switches and hummels are almost invariably heavy beasts.

Over the question, "Will a hummel beget a hummel?" I have often puzzled. That a stag of this kind, or a switch, or in fact any stag with bad tops, should beget offspring capable of growing really good heads seemed on the face of it most unlikely, but there were no data on which to form an opinion. Only one owner of any experience gave me a definite answer when I put the question to him. He emphatically said that they did. The majority replied that they did not know. The mother's stock would definitely affect the result of the union; but now Captain Donne, the author of *The Game Animals of New Zealand*, writes: "I have definite information of a hummel stag in Scotland being enclosed during the rut with some hinds. Three male calves were produced. One of them was, like his father, a hummel; another one being a unicorn with no sign of horn growth on the left pedicle; while the third had both antlers malformed." This seems definitely to show that, though a hummel may not beget a hummel, he is at any rate a very undesirable animal to have in the forest. They are ugly, pig-like brutes, and for some unknown reason are very often missed, even by good shots. Some stalkers consider that they bear charmed lives.

Cases are known of hinds with rudimentary horns, but they are very small and usually consist of small bony excrescences on the skull.

At times deer are killed with traces of old wounds. Lieut.-Colonel Henry shot a stag at Inchnacardoch in 1913 which was found to have a $3\frac{1}{4}$ -inch packing needle embedded in its shoulder. He suggested that the animal must have swallowed it in some food, and that the needle, which was between the ribs and the shoulder, must have worked its way into this position.

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A keeper at Corriemoney once saw a hind with her hind legs crossed in so extraordinary a manner that she could only hobble, and followed the herd she was with very slowly. He shot her with a shot-gun, when she was found to be very old and in an emaciated condition. When separated, the hind legs swung together again. Her teeth were gone and the knees rubbed clean of hair, as she had to kneel in order to feed.

My friend, Major Soames, when he rented Glenfinnan saw a stag, galloping over rough ground, turn a complete somersault, land on his head, and break off one horn completely at the pedicle. Some years ago one of the stalkers at Wyvis found a dead stag which had evidently been bitten in the tongue by a snake. The front of the body down to the forelegs was much swollen. I have never heard of a similar case, though in olden days deer were credited with the power of swallowing vipers! In this instance the stag must have been bitten by an adder.

A very remarkable incident was reported from Wyvis in 1923. A very good royal—he knew the stag well—was seen by Colonel Shoolbred on November 25th and watched for some time. On November 27th, being again on the same part of the forest, he looked out for the stag, but could not make him out, though he noticed what appeared to be a big hummel. On examining the head of this stag through the glass he saw that the horns had been quite recently shed.

On November 28th this hornless stag was identified by three of the stalkers as the royal they all knew, and that same afternoon one of them found the right horn a little way up the hill above where the stag had been seen. On the next day he found the left horn a little further up the hill.

Both the horns were, in appearance, absolutely normally shed horns, and their measurements are:—

	Right.	Left.
Length	33½ in.	32½ in.
Beam (taken at smallest part between bez and trez points)	4½ in.	5 in.
Weight	2 lb. 15½ oz.	3 lb. 1½ oz.

All the points are good with the exception of the third point on the left top, which is quite small.

It is most unusual for any full-grown Highland stag to shed his horns at so early a date—four months before the normal period—and I have never heard of a similar case.

In 1924—April 20th approximately—he started to grow his new horns, two or three weeks later than any of his companions, who shed at the usual time, towards the end of March or beginning of April. His horns grew rapidly, and he was one of the earliest stags to clean. He only carried eight points, missing the bays, with a fork on each top. Though not so good as the head of the previous year, the horn was strong and rough. Incidentally

he provides a conclusive argument to those stalkers who invariably condemn an 8-pointer on the ground that he will never carry a really good head.

Various stalkers gave it as their opinion that this early shedding was due to some injury to the stag's generative organs; but this view never seemed to me to be at all likely, as both in 1923 and 1924 he had large herds of hinds. At Wyvis his vagary was attributed to excess of condition, which may be the correct explanation. He was killed in 1925 carrying a royal head with strong, rough horns with a length of 36 inches. The full measurements will be found in the table preceding this chapter.

A stag has been known at Affarie for the past few years with a head of eleven points which does not shed the velvet until January. The horns are shed as usual.

Deer sometimes meet with strange accidents. I have kept a record of those which have been mentioned in the Press during the past twenty years or so, and some of them are of sufficient interest to recall. By far the commonest, so far as stags are concerned, are those cases in which their antlers become entangled in wire fences. So much as twenty-five yards of wire have been taken from a stag's horns after he was shot, and it is a wonder that, in instances of this kind, when the animal has become thoroughly tied up, he is able to break away. I have quite a number of photographs of stags' heads with wire entangled in the horns. Sometimes it happens that it is the animal's neck or legs which become entwined, and then they usually strangle themselves or starve to death. More rarely a deer gets a foot jammed in a crack in the rocks and is unable to extricate itself. A photograph appeared in *Country Life* some years ago of a stag imprisoned in this manner in the fast rising waters of the River Dee. His hind leg was jammed in a crevice in the rocks, and the force of the stream, swollen by the spring snows, swung him round till his head was pointing down stream. Before the stalker could arrive to end his sufferings he had lost his footing and drowned. In Ardverikie, Mar, Invercauld, as well as in other forests, cases are recorded of deer, usually stags, or their skeletons, being found with feet held fast between the rocks.

Stags are not infrequently caught in the forks of trees by their horns, and, unable to extricate themselves, die a lingering death. I have a photograph of a good stag which was found in a position of this kind in the mountains of Otago, in New Zealand, by Mr. Arthur Hawley. Another instance occurred in Argyllshire, though the narrator of the incident betrays his ignorance of deer by saying, "Deer are obviously ill-fitted for a sylvan life!" In this particular case a young stag had got caught in the fork of a tree about 15 inches in diameter at the point where the fork grew. When he became aware of the approach of man he made frantic efforts to free himself and at length, in a final struggle, succeeded in breaking the branch which held him and escaped. Many are not so fortunate. A stag which had

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been wounded and bayed by the trackers at Glenfinnan, on the approach of the stalkers dashed into a small clump of trees, where his horns became so firmly fixed in a fork that his head had to be cut off before it could be removed.

I have only come across one instance of a hind being killed in this way.

In the Reay forest a stag caught his foot in a trap which had been set for a fox. He broke away with the trap attached to his foot, chain and all. A stalker came on him suddenly one day and so startled him that the foot, which had probably started to fester, was left behind with the trap. The stag was shot later in the season.

A stag at Glenartney fell into a small hole about two feet deep and, his horns becoming jammed, died.

There is a certain amount of elasticity in horns, and a fallow buck in Germany, rubbing his horns against a tree, got them so firmly fixed on either side of the trunk that he was unable to free them and was found dead.

At Woburn a fallow buck in some extraordinary manner managed to get his horns wedged in between the bars of a hurdle in such a way that they were interlaced, and it thus came to an untimely end.

In Badenoch, near Loch Laggan, some years ago a stag, while trying to reach some branches above him, slipped and fell forward into a crevice in the rocks from which he could not extricate himself, his weight causing him to become tightly jammed. He was found dead in this position.

The most extraordinary accident of this kind, however, occurred at Glenaroy, in Argyllshire, and is described by Captain Hart Davis in his *Stalking Sketches*. The stag in question had been licking himself and slipped, locking himself into his own antlers. When found his horns were fixed round his body behind the forelegs, with his broken neck twisted underneath.

Stags are not infrequently seen with bits of branches or heather entangled in their horns. A curious incident was mentioned in the *Field* in 1925. Some stalkers saw what they took for a man with a white flag coming towards them. Galloping away were about three hundred deer. On examination, it was found that the supposed man with the flag was, in reality, a stag with his antlers covered with sheep's wool. He was a young 10-pointer, and presumably when feeding the wool must have become entangled in his horns in such a way that he was unable to free himself. During the same season while stalking on the west coast I saw a small stag in a similar predicament.

A very curious accident, of which a hind was the victim, occurred at Badanloch, in Sutherlandshire. Nosing probably about some deserted cottage, she came across an old bottomless pail. When she pushed her nose in to make further investigations, the handle slipped over her neck. For a fortnight or more she carried this strange necklace. Whenever she moved, the handle of the bucket clattered against its tin sides, making a considerable noise and frightening all the other deer. Then she was shot.

CHAPTER XXVI

NOTES ON THE HABITS OF DEER

"Since I was born, and snuffed the braes,
The stag was my friend, and the deer was my fellow."

DÓMHNULL MAC FHEINLLAIDH NAN DAN.

IN George Turberville's *Noble Arte of Venerie or Hunting* (1576) he quotes Pliny, who "sayeth that deare can endure to swymme thirtie myles endwayes, and that he hath seene experience thereof in the Ile of Cypres, from whence they go commonly unto the Ile of Cylice, the which is thirtie myles distant. Yea and he sayeth, that they have the vent and sent of the Rut from the one Ile to the other." That deer are good swimmers is well known, though it is rather a strain on one's credulity to accept the facts in the above quotation.

In *The Lays of the Deer-forests* it states that "It is common for them to cross the straits of Mull and Skye, and between Jura and Isla, where the current is so strong that it carries down the swimmer in a diagonal of four miles before he lands." A stag was captured in Kilbrannan Sound between Kintyre and Arran, four' miles at sea, and apparently swimming for that island, which is twelve miles distant from the mainland. A number of deer swam from Uist to Berneray Island and were attacked and frightened off by the islanders. They swam the Sound of Harris, losing two of their number by drowning, and landed at Rodel to the number of a dozen or so. They were seen about the woods here for some days and were then lost sight of, their ultimate fate being unknown.

In 1846 a young stag was captured by some herring boats five miles off the coast of Morayshire. In Gordon's *Earldom of Sutherland* the author writes: "In Durness, west and north-west from the Dirimore, there is an excellent and delectable place for hunting, called the Parwe, where they hunt the reid deir in abundance; and sometimes they dryve them into the ocean sea at the Pharohead, where they do tak' them in boats as they list."

The deer on the island of Pabbay, in the Sound of Harris, swim across to Berneray, two miles distant at the nearest point, and they will swim inland lochs with the greatest confidence. They swim strongly and rapidly. A stag was seen by the occupants of a boat starting to swim a loch in Sutherland-

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shire seven or eight hundred yards across. They gave chase, but it was only as he approached the opposite shore that they were able to draw level with him.

A stag imported from the south, with the idea of improving the breed of deer in one of the Hebridean islands, on being liberated from the crate in which it had travelled, immediately plunged into the sea and swam for the mainland three-quarters of a mile away, which it reached without mishap.

Deer when wounded will often take to water, and several instances are recorded of stalkers swimming out to them, climbing on their backs and eventually killing them. A stalker at Mamore, then (1862) in the hands of Colonel Campbell of Monzie, very nearly lost his life by his rash act. The wounded stag had been bayed by a deerhound in a deep pool in the River Nevis. The stalker, watching his opportunity, jumped on its back and actually cut its throat while in this position. Like the majority of Highland ghillies he could not swim, and had it not been for the presence of his companions would certainly have been drowned. The Duke of Edinburgh once swam out and killed a stag which had taken refuge in the Dubh Loch, near Loch-na-gar.

A stalker at Balmacaan told me he had seen a wounded stag swim Loch Ness with only three legs. Two dogs, an old and a young one, followed him. The young one turned back, but the old hound followed him right across the loch to Foyers and killed him on the opposite shore. I have known a herd of stags, frightened by a shot, swim right across a loch without any hesitation.

A stag, wounded in the hind leg, used to feed in a turnip field in Glenmoriston. My brother lay in wait for him, but missed him. He headed straight for Loch Ness and plunged in when my brother shot him.

Occasionally deer are found asleep on the hill. I once came on a stag which allowed me to approach to within a couple of yards before he awoke and dashed off. Needless to say, he was an entirely unremarkable animal in every way. I have never heard of a really good beast which permitted such a liberty! A stalker at Ardnamurchan a few years ago walked up to a sleeping hind and actually caught hold of her ear!

I have on one or two occasions killed deer that have lost the sight of one eye. I saw a roe last November one of whose eyes was blue. Whether this young buck was blind in this eye I could never satisfactorily determine.

The eyesight of deer is not extraordinarily good, though they will very quickly pick up a moving object at a great distance. Provided, however, that one remains *absolutely* motionless it is possible to take great liberties. Normally speaking, I should say that a deer's eyesight is about equal to that of a man with good sight. Possibly a keen-sighted man would detect an unusual motionless object more quickly than would a deer. Whether or not

the perception of colour enters into the question I am not prepared to say. My own idea is, without perhaps very strong grounds, that animals have only a limited colour sense. The sight of red deer is not so quick as that of roe, though their powers of scenting danger are very much greater.

Every one who has studied deer knows—though apparently some of the correspondents of various papers during the “silly season” do not—that deer gnaw their antlers. Both stags and hinds will gnaw shed horns, and several instances are on record of the live horns of a stag being gnawed by another animal of the same species. Colonel Platt saw a stag quietly lying while another young stag was busily engaged in gnawing at the lower points of his horns. The stag was shot and found to be an old beast with his left brow and bay points half gnawed, and also the top of his right horn.

A crofter, too, killed a couple of stags which had been eating his crops. He hung the carcasses up as impromptu scares, and the next morning found that other deer, far from being frightened, were engaged in gnawing the horns of their dead companions.

Many instances are recorded of both stags and hinds while gnawing bones meeting with accidents. In one case a stag was killed which had the pelvis of another beast firmly fixed on its lower jaw in such a manner that it was impossible for it to feed. Had it not been shot it would have starved to death. Deer are sometimes choked by swallowing a piece of bone or horn, and I once shot a stag which had a piece of a young stag's horn in his stomach. It consisted of the coronet, much worn and flattened, measuring about two inches by four, and a small piece of the main beam.

Deer have been known to kill young grouse with their feet and nibble them, and also to eat their eggs. They are also said, when hard pressed for food, to eat dead rabbits which have been trapped. Stags have been seen with the leg bones and bits of skin of their relatives hopelessly entangled in their horns.

To quote our old friend George Turberville again. He writes, “The Hartes and Hyndes may live an hundreth yeres,” but cautiously adds “according to Phœbus saying.” (This is Count Gaston de Foix, so nick-named on account of his beauty and golden hair. He was the author of the *Livre de Chasse*.)

To continue Turberville: “And wee finde in auncient historiographers, that an Harte was taken, having a collar about his necke full three hundreth yeares after the death of Cæsar, in which collar Cæsar's armes were engraved, and a mot written saying, Cæsarus me fecit.” Which looks rather as if some one had been having a joke with posterity at Cæsar's expense!

The oft-quoted Gaelic proverb which attributes to the stag a life of three hundred years is too well known to bear repetition. There is no valid reason that I can discover why the age of a deer should greatly exceed that of other mammals, which, with the exception of the elephant, are all comparatively short lived.

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In Daniel's *Rural Sports* it is stated that animals live seven times the number of years that brings them to perfection, but this estimate is excessive.

A deer thirty years of age would, in my opinion, be a very old beast, and it is pretty safe to say that there is not a beast in Scotland at the present time which can claim so long a life. Mr. McConnochie mentions a hind at Guisachan which died of old age when twenty-nine. "Her head had become quite white and her neck quite stiff—she could not look backwards without turning the whole body."

A wild hind has been known to calve at the age of twenty-three, and hinds have lived both in parks and in a wild state for twenty-two years and more. In *The Life of Joseph Wolf* there is mention of a stag from Knowsley which lived to twenty-five years of age.

When Wyvis was first afforested twelve hinds came from Glen Strathfarrar and Invermark. Most of them lost their teeth by the time they were twelve or thirteen. Two lived to the age of fifteen, and one to twenty-four. The latter's teeth were in perfect condition, though long. Incidentally it may be mentioned that most experienced stalkers consider Indian corn is bad for deer's teeth.

One stalker remembered twenty pairs of horns from one stag, and this must be pretty nearly a record.

Mr. Allan Gordon Cameron mentions a stag on Jura which had a royal head which was spared for twelve years and during that period exhibited no change either in head or body. He was in perfect condition when killed and cannot have been much less than twenty years old.

The condition of the teeth is all important in determining the age of deer, and Mr. Lydekker pointed out that a deer's teeth—that is, the cheek teeth, the molars and pre-molars—are very much shorter than those of a horse of the same age. A deer's teeth, too, have little or no "cement" between the columns of enamel and dentine, so that there is every reason to believe that a deer's life would be shorter than that of a horse. Mr. Lydekker had a photograph taken of the skull of a stag which was fifteen years old at the time of his death, and this shows the cheek teeth to be very much worn and decayed. Making all due allowance for varieties in food, etc., there is little doubt that this stag was not very far off the term of his natural life when he met his death through an accident. Deer in confinement reach maturity rather sooner—a year or two—than those living in a natural state; they may or may not live longer, but weighing all the available evidence, it does not seem likely that wild deer exceed an age much greater than twenty or thereabouts if they are permitted to die a natural death. The average age of a stag in Scotland at the present day—I mean of those brought into the larder—is nowhere near this figure. I very much doubt if it is nine.

The longer one stalks the more one realises what a tremendous lot there

is to learn about deer and how easy it is to fall into errors. Twenty years ago I should have glibly affirmed that it was a comparatively easy matter from his general appearance on the hill to distinguish a young stag from an old. Generally speaking, no doubt, this is so, but it is fatally easy to make a mistake.

A few years ago I was stalking in Argyllshire. It was a horrible day, cold, and wet, with a strong wind. Late in the afternoon we heard a stag roaring on the opposite hillside and, after some trouble, managed to locate him. He was alone, but there were other deer within a few hundred yards. To get at him we had to descend to the bottom of the corrie, when we were out of sight of the deer above us, and then climb the opposite face. It was getting dark and the wind was blowing in our faces. Several times we heard roaring, and advanced up the hill in the direction of the sound. Presently the stalker stopped and made signs to me that he saw the stag. I crept up to him and saw a stag standing looking down the hill within shot. The head looked to me small, and I asked the stalker, not once, but three times, if he was quite certain it was the right stag. He replied that there was no doubt about it at all. I shot the stag, and on going up to him was horrified to find he was quite small, with all the unmistakable signs of a young beast. He weighed, we subsequently discovered, about 12 stone. His horns were light, smooth, with seven or eight short points. The brows grew, not close down just above the coronet, but 3 or 4 inches from the base of the horn. I must confess that I was very angry, and told the stalker that it was no pleasure to me to shoot stags of that size when they were young beasts, and that I was the more annoyed as I had repeatedly asked him to make certain that it was the right stag before I fired. He was very crestfallen and assured me that he was just as sorry as I was, and that he had genuinely believed it to be the stag we had been stalking. On our return I apologised to my host for having killed a young beast and explained the circumstances. Now, he and not I should be writing a book on deer, for he knows far more about them than I do! The next morning he came into the smoking-room after breakfast and said to me, holding out a skull, "Come and look at your young stag!" It was undoubtedly that of an old stag, and equally, without any doubt, it was the skull of the stag which I had killed the previous day! I am very doubtful if many of those so-called young stags which are passed over when spying a herd as being beneath notice, are not in reality old stags which have deteriorated so much in body and horn that their external appearance completely deceives the onlooker.

The only conclusive age tests which can be applied to a stag are, unfortunately, those which are only eligible when he is in the larder.

The most conclusive and the best test is to ascertain the extent of ossification between the cranial sutures. In Mr. Cameron's words: "In

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young deer the sutures of the skull (frontal and parietal) are sharply defined by a delicate tracery of interlacing lines, which grow gradually fainter with advancing years, and in old deer are all but obliterated." He goes on to say: "To define or detect age marks for hinds on the open hill, except as between very young and very old, is an even greater puzzle than in the case of stags." With this I entirely agree, except that, as I have said, I believe it is not always possible to detect even an old stag by his outward appearance.

In the case of the Argyllshire stag I have mentioned ossification had practically closed the sutures of the skull, which was quite smooth and bore other signs of age. The pedicles were comparatively long. A short pedicle is always held by stalkers to be an infallible sign of age. There is certainly no doubt that the pedicles do shorten with age, for each time the horns are shed a portion of the pedicle is detached, as is shown by the convex base of shed antlers. If all stags were born with pedicles of an uniform length it would considerably facilitate matters. Unfortunately they are not, and an old stag, though his pedicles will be thicker, may have longer ones than those of a young stag. In any case, before the point can be satisfactorily settled as regards an individual, the stag must be dead!

Teeth are a very useful criterion of the age of a stag, and an animal whose teeth are beginning to go can safely be put down as an old beast.

An old beast is usually very grey about the head, but this varies with individuals, and there is no certainty as to colour in relation to age.

Though called "red" deer, you may find every variety of tone in a herd of deer, from deep chocolate umber through every shade of red to pale yellow ochre. An arm-chair scientist from skins alone might claim half a dozen different varieties of deer from one forest! White red deer are not very uncommon, and have always made a certain appeal to the imagination. In old days the appearance of a white hart was heralded with great pomp, and the whole Court took part in the chase, including ladies. The lucky slayer had the privilege of choosing the most beautiful girl, and kissing the one on whom he had set his fancy. This custom, not unnaturally, led to so much jealousy and bad feeling that it had to be abandoned. Methods of hunting may change, but human nature never!

Aristotle mentions the existence of white deer, and as albinism is hereditary within the limits of certain laws, they have continued down to the present day. Mr. McConnochie gives some interesting instances of historical white deer. Henry III fined some sportsmen who had made too free with a white hart which had given much diversion, and there are stories of James III, James VI, Robert Bruce, and various other monarchs in connection with such animals, which he narrates.

White red deer, at any rate, when they are fully grown, are usually a

dirty yellow, though I have seen a calf which was really white and conspicuous at a great distance.

At Langley Park, near Slough, the home of Sir Robert Harvey, there is a very fine herd of white red deer, the stags carrying up to twenty-three points. They were originated by the father of the present owner about fifty years ago. They are said to be of the same blood as those which were formerly in one of the royal parks near Copenhagen. The Whittlebury herd was divided between Stoke and Langley, all the normal coloured calves being killed. At Windsor, Welbeck, and Alnwick there are also herds of these animals. These deer are rarely, if ever, true albinos in the sense that they have pink eyes and noses. These organs are usually of the normal colour.

The whitest stag I ever saw in a wild state was at Glenkingie and was probably a descendant of one of those sent to Glenquoich from Welbeck by the 9th Duke of Bedford about fifty years ago. When I saw him he was a good 11-pointer and is still, so far as I know, alive.¹

There are, in several forests at the present time, white red deer, which local correspondents have drawn attention to. One of these gentlemen recently wrote: "Never in the history of deer forests has a pure white wild red-deer calf been seen until this year," a statement whose boldness is only equalled by its inaccuracy. A white hind was seen at Letterewe in 1890; a white stag at Erchless in 1900; a white hind at Loch Treig; and another stag at Dundonnell in 1922. There was a white stag at Glendoe in 1900. "The white stag of Badenoch" was, according to all accounts, a great wanderer and was killed in Strathglass on October 17th, 1901. There is a white stag about the marches of Strathglass now. He was seen at Pait during the past stalking season. White deer have been seen in the forests of Atholl, Balmoral, Dalness, Glenfeshie, Glenmuick, Glentamar, Invermark, Killilan, Rothiemurchus, Cozac, Cluanie, and Ardkinglas within recent years, though this list does not pretend to be comprehensive.

Twenty years ago I saw two very fine white stags in Charlborough Park, Dorsetshire. There were two or three hinds with white faces, pale eyes, and white legs which changed to dun.

One unfortunate animal in an Inverness-shire forest had a patch of white the size of a half-crown just over its heart; whilst a stalker in the Reay forest once shot a hind with a white saddle.

The most remarkable case of a white deer, though the species is not mentioned, which I have ever met, appeared in an American paper. A Mr. Fagan shot a big white deer whose appearance was familiar. On returning to camp the animal was identified as one that had appeared to "the hunters"! the day before. "At that time no less than twenty-nine shots had been fired at it, all of which had missed. Every man in the party had got in at least

¹ This stag was killed by Lord Belper in 1926 and carried a fine head of 13 points.

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one shot, and some had blazed away four times. The strange part of it was that on this day the deer was a reddish grey ! Experienced hunters declare that the terrific fusilade had so frightened the deer that its hair had turned white in a single day."

I think that the opinion of the "experienced hunters" can hardly be correct. If it were, we should expect to find the north of Scotland teeming with white deer, at any rate in the neighbourhood of some forests ; whereas they are comparatively rare.

CHAPTER XXVII

SOME FURTHER NOTES ON THE HABITS OF DEER

"Give me the forest wide and high,
The mountain and the vale,
Where dwell the herds of piercing eye,
Whose speed outstrips the gale."

AN CIARAN MABACH.

PERHAPS the most interesting time to see a herd of deer is in October. They are, as is well known, great fighters, and, when with the hinds, a stag leads a pretty strenuous life. His attention is continually occupied.

I doubt if a big beast with a large number of hinds gets any sleep at all for days, one might almost say weeks on end. Watchful rivals are for ever hanging on the flanks of his harem ready to dash in and cut out a stray hind or two if their master's alertness is relaxed for a moment. Towards the end of October, worn to skin and bone, with bloodshot eyes, completely exhausted, he can no longer display his former activity, and smaller beasts may evade his weakened fury. Early in the year, when their horns are soft, stags will frequently spar and fight with their forelegs. Mr. Millais and I were watching the deer in the park at Warnham one hot afternoon and two big stags were at it the whole time, standing up and cutting at each other, subsiding for a bit, and then up again on their hind legs, ears laid back, ready for another sparring bout. Hinds have vicious little encounters also, and strike at each other in the same manner, looking the personification of evil temper. If hustled over rough country, or when a herd has been alarmed and they are jostling each other, it is quite common to see them act thus. Stags will use their forefeet in the spring also, after they have shed their horns, though I fancy they do not inflict any very serious damage on each other. A stag I knew used to hate dogs and would attack any he saw. He killed more than one with his feet.

Encounters between red stags are rarely fatal, though at times the combatants attack each other with great vigour. It is amusing to watch two stags making up their minds to fight seriously. The affair usually begins by a voice competition. They then gradually approach each other, the stag in possession of the hinds being constantly on the move rounding up his

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fickle harem. When there are two big stags, each having a large herd of hinds, it is most exciting to watch. The two champions often pace up and down a neutral piece of hillside roaring defiance, but without showing any great anxiety to come to close quarters. I have watched stags walking or trotting alongside each other, with perhaps only a yard or two between them, for half an hour or more. They would turn at a given point, roar, and then traverse the same piece of hillside again, before repeating the performance. Sometimes one stag, for no apparent reason, will abandon his hinds without a fight and bolt off suddenly down the hill, pursued for a short distance by the other, who will then return and assume undisturbed possession of the entire herd to the number of a hundred or more. I have seen a stag with at least a hundred and thirty hinds. When they really do fight it is a beautiful spectacle to watch, with the hinds grouped round in a wide semicircle waiting to see to whose lot they will fall.

I witnessed a very good fight at Corriemony a few years ago. An 8-pointer held about seventy hinds which fed into a herd belonging to another stag, a 10-pointer. He was a very nice looking beast, though a good deal lighter than his opponent. Though he had not the best position, he went for the 8-pointer without the slightest hesitation. A really determined fight ensued. The clashing of their horns was clearly audible at a great distance as first one and then the other sprang forward in a manner which can only be described as a fierce kind of pounce. Stags will always manœuvre for an uphill position, and this the 10-pointer was unable to gain. Time after time the superior weight of the other stag told, until eventually the strength of the lighter animal became exhausted; he broke away after some close infighting and, turning, dashed down the hill. All my sympathies were with him, though I fear that that did not prevent me taking advantage of an easy shot he gave me later in the day. I have never felt such a pang at the death of any stag, for he was a most gallant beast, and even when shot through the heart *would* not give in, but fought for his life, as he had earlier in the day, and died on his feet like a gentleman. He weighed 15 st. 8 lb., and his conqueror, whom I shot a day or two later, 17 st. 3 lb. They were two good stags.

I have never myself actually found a stag killed in a fight, but some years ago my wife came across a nice 10-pointer, an old stag, which had been dead two or three days. There was a hole about an inch and a half in diameter over his heart, and his flanks were much gored. I have reason to believe that I afterwards shot the stag which had killed him.

In the *Field* of October 9th, 1920, Colonel McLauchlan gave an interesting account of a stag which he stalked and which, during the stalk, vanished, another stag taking his place. This stag was shot and the original stag discovered, dead, his liver and stomach pierced by the horn of the other. They

were both 10-pointers, the original beast carrying the better head of the two, with a wider span.

A very unusual occurrence was mentioned in *The Scottish Field* some years ago. A large herd of deer, in March, had got the wind of a man who was watching them. Their doubt and uncertainty increased until one of the stags stepped up to the foremost one, a nice 8-pointer about eight years old, and gave him a sharp dig with his horn. The stag fell as if shot, when the remaining deer moved off. On going up to the fallen animal, it was found that the horn had pierced the spinal vertebræ just above the kidneys, the wound being quite $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep. A similar incident was reported in 1920 at Glenavon. During a drive a stag was shot which fell on another beast coming up behind it, knocking it over a precipice and killing it. I have seen deer fall and rise badly shaken, but never with a fatal result.

Cases of stags being found dead with their horns locked have been recorded, though they are not common. Perhaps the best known instance is that of the two now at Gordon Castle. Two dead stags with interlocked horns were found at Dundonnell in 1920.

I was once told by a stalking friend of mine that he had seen a stag throw another stag clean over his back with his horns, but I must confess that I should have thought such a feat in the highest degree improbable, strong though the necks of horn-bearing animals are.

Stags often break their horns fighting, and Lord Belper in 1924 at Glenkingie watched a fight in which a 10-pointer was very nearly killed. He went off, lay down by himself, was stalked and shot. Most of his points were broken, so Lord Belper went back to the spot where the fight had taken place and found most of the broken pieces of horn on the ground.

McNicol, the stalker at Sandside, showed me a piece of the skull and one horn of a stag which had been torn off in a fight. The bone had grown again, but at the time of the accident the brain must have been almost uncovered. No pedicle was left, but a piece of bone was growing off the skull at an angle.¹

A rather curious fact with regard to deer fighting was told me by the agent of a big park in Dorsetshire which held red deer, many years ago. A number of stags were killed during the rut by other stags, and on skinning the dead ones it was found that though in many cases the lungs and flesh were pierced through, the skins themselves were comparatively uninjured.

A recent writer in the *Field* says that a stalker whom he knows, who has lived for fifty years in one forest, has only twice actually seen the rut, and his son, a man of forty, never. The writer himself, Mr. Mortimer Batten, had only once seen it, in the daytime, and that only at a great distance.

¹ A case was mentioned in *The Field*, 25th Nov., 1926, of a stag which had his skull split in a fight, the horns being attached to the head by the skin alone.

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I do not think that I am unusually lucky, but I have often seen this occurrence in various forests, and so, I imagine, have most men who have stalked for any considerable time. Probably the greatest activity in this line occurs in the early morning, but it is governed largely by the condition of the hinds.

To see a roe at the rut is another matter. I have seen it myself once, and McKid, the keeper at Westerton, on one occasion witnessed it, but to the best of my recollection I have never met anyone else who has done so, with the exception of Mr. Millais. I have more than once seen a hind lick a stag's face after the rut has taken place. I once saw a stag go up to a hind who awaited his coming with her neck stretched out. As he drew near she moved her tongue very rapidly in and out of her mouth, licking her lips. This seemed to satisfy him for some reason, for he left her. It was a curious incident.

I have seen, too, a stag lick the top of the head and ears of hinds which were lying down. They seemed extremely bored at his osculatory efforts and kept moving their heads out of the way and shaking them. Possibly the reader has had similar experiences!

When a stag roars he sometimes has the tip of his tongue resting against the edge of the front teeth in his lower jaw; at others the tongue will hang right out of his mouth over the lower jaw. At this time of year also stags will rapidly lick their lips with the tongue.

Mr. Millais gives a drawing in *British Deer* of an eagle which has struck at a hind close to the edge of a precipice. He mentions a place in the Blackmount where the great birds were in the habit of doing this when they were in want of a meal, but expresses himself as being sceptical of their ever attacking a full-grown stag. Colonel Shoolbred of Wyvis, to whom I owe many happy days on the hill, showed me a letter from one of his stalkers in which he described the attack by two eagles on a full-grown stag. They beat it over the back of the head with their powerful wings in an endeavour to drive it over a precipice exactly in the manner in which Mr. Millais has shown in his spirited drawing. In this they would have undoubtedly succeeded but for the fact that there was a wood handy, into which the stag escaped and where the eagles were unable to follow. I have heard of another case in which an eagle attacked a young stag, buffeting him about the head with its wings and knocking him over. Then, for some unknown reason, the bird flew away!

The late Captain Allan Cameron of Lochiel told me that he had seen eagles frighten calves over a precipice as described above.

A keeper I knew once killed an eagle, knocking it on the head with his stick. He found it in a narrow gully where it had been gorging on a dead lamb. It was unable to rise, and so paid the penalty of its greed.

Eagles will, of course, attack other animals besides deer, and a friend of mine once saw a fox making springs at an eagle which was getting under weigh and pulling great tufts of feathers out of the bird, though even for a vixen this showed unusual courage.

On one occasion an eagle seized a little terrier which was running behind its master, one of the Blackmount stalkers. The man turned round and was horrified to see his dog being carried off while he was powerless to save it. However, the dog struggled violently, and after flying for about a hundred yards the bird dropped it. It was, eventually, none the worse for its encounter.

I have seen an eagle move a whole herd of deer as it flew over their heads and they exhibited great agitation. On one particular occasion the eagle's presence was not unwelcome, as the deer were in a very difficult place to stalk, and by moving them the bird enabled me to get an easy shot and kill the stag.

A correspondent of *The Free Press* gave some interesting instances of eagles attacking deer some years ago. At Ben Alder a stalking party noticed a small herd of hinds coming into view with an eagle in pursuit. It seized a calf, which screamed with pain when its mother came to the rescue and all three rolled over together on the steep slope of the hill. "In the descent the eagle lost its grip, the hind thereupon conducting its calf to the centre of the herd. The disappointed bird sat on the ground for a little while, about forty yards off, in a most disconsolate manner; then, with evident reluctance, gave up all hopes of venison and flew away."

Eagles often attack roe-deer when their chances of success are greater than with red deer, and the remains of fawns are frequently found in their nests.

I have not infrequently heard of stags attacking dogs and horses, but I think it is extremely doubtful if a wild stag would ever really attack a man. In *Stalks Abroad* I gave an instance which came under my own notice of a stag in New Zealand which certainly gave every indication of a pugnacious disposition, but this was in the dark, which no doubt had a good deal to do with his boldness. I doubt if he would have pushed his attack home in broad daylight. Wounded stags will, at times, attempt an attack, and such animals should always be approached with caution.

I once shot a stag, the bullet going through both his shoulders, but in such a way that, though the animal was disabled and unable to rise, he had the use of his hind legs. We went up to where he lay and I hooked my stick in his horns. Then, catching hold of them and holding his head down, I told the stalker to administer the *coup de grâce*. He was very nervous and kept making ineffectual dabs at the stag's neck with his knife. This only had the effect of making the animal struggle violently, it being all I could do to hold him down. I cried to the stalker to finish him, so, summoning his

resolution, he gave a tremendous prod with his knife which reached the stag's heart. He gave a heave with his hind quarters and hurled his body forwards. I was standing down hill, and his final effort caused the whole body to rise and fall on my left arm, which was stretched at full length holding the horn. I thought at first the arm was broken. Fortunately it was only bruised, but I was black and blue from the wrist to the shoulder for three weeks.

A stalker at Lochrosque in the 'eighties had a nasty adventure. Duncan Fraser by name, he was digging potatoes in an enclosure in which was kept a tame stag. Hearing a noise behind him, he looked round to see the beast charging him. So close was the animal that he had no time to turn, and received a severe blow in the back, the horns passing on each side of his body under his arms. He fell forward clutching the horns, of which he dared not let go. There were some cottages about three hundred yards off, and he yelled for help with all the power of his lungs. For long no one paid any attention, those who heard his cries saying afterwards that, though they heard them, they did not think they were of any consequence! For over half an hour Fraser remained struggling with the stag in this terrible position, and eventually, help arriving, the beast was driven off with sticks. The man was terribly knocked about and was in bed for six weeks as a result of the injuries he sustained.

Two years later this same stag killed a stalker, John McLennan. The case is well known. His battered spy-glass and broken stick were found beside his body, showing that he had put up a good fight for his life. The stag knew him well, as he was accustomed to feed it; but, as has been remarked before, deer seem incapable of displaying any affection for their benefactors. The people in the district turned out and shot the stag, building a large cairn on the spot. Trees were planted there, and the place was afterwards hidden by the plantation.

The lover of Nature compelled to remain within sound of Big Ben may satisfy his cravings in a mild manner by watching those confined herds of red and fallow deer which exist in the various parks provided for his delectation. He will, however, do well to keep his eyes about him, for though the fallow buck is usually regarded as a tame and harmless creature, he can, like all the deer tribe, even the little roe, inflict fatal injuries. It is only a few years since that an unfortunate hairdresser of middle age was killed in Greenwich Park. Early one morning he was reading his newspaper when a six-year-old buck, which was subsequently described at the inquest as being of a very docile disposition, charged him and knocked him down. He declined medical assistance, but half an hour later was discovered lying unconscious in the road. He was taken to the hospital, and died about midday from coma following hæmorrhage of the brain. "He had bruises on his wrists,

a punctured wound in the stomach, and five ribs on each side were broken," all produced by the docile, delicate-looking fallow buck. The unfortunate man's death was avenged by the execution of his assailant!

Deer are inclined to be misogynists, and one old woman in Scotland was bundled into a canal in a most ungallant manner by a roebuck.

The *Observer* of 1805 (November 27th) relates that a Mr. R. Hughes was pursuing a stray buck with some friends, and alighted from his horse to kill the animal, which had been seized by his hounds. The buck, resenting this behaviour, suddenly turned and forced his horn into Mr. Hughes' thigh. "Mr. H. was taken home almost lifeless from loss of blood."

They do not confine their hostility to mankind, but frequently fight between themselves, though such encounters, with this species, are rarely fatal. A most unusual occurrence, however, took place some years ago in the New Forest. Two fallow bucks were found one day with interlocked antlers, quite dead. They were not facing each other, as is usually the case in instances of this kind, and the presumption was that one buck had attacked the other from behind, got his antlers interlocked in so doing, and by the impetus gained had turned a complete somersault and broken his neck. Both deer fell into a ditch, and the buck which had been attacked was apparently suffocated in the mud, being unable to free itself.

Only a few years ago two fallow bucks had a fight in Bushy Park. They were first seen near the Leg of Mutton Pond, and appeared much exhausted. Before a park-keeper could reach the spot one of them fell and lay as if dead. The other tender-hearted animal, overcome with remorse, ran to another pond close by and walked straight in out of its depth, "when it seemed to push its head under water and keep it there." An intelligent spectator said it looked as if it had committed suicide, and its body was recovered, though the antlers were stuck fast in the mud. Being quite convinced of its opponent's death, the other buck recovered. The account concludes: "It is stated that some time ago two deer fought, and one was killed. The survivor was drowned in exactly the same way." I wonder what comments would have been made if this story had come from, say, America?

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE WEIGHTS OF DEER

"Some few ounces of Scottish blood."—ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH.

MORE confusion exists and more nonsense is talked about weights than anything else connected with stalking. Personally, save as an indication of age, I do not care what a stag weighs, but some people consider it all-important.

A good stag will weigh about 15 st., though wood-fed beasts and marauders on oatfields often attain to over 20 st. The heaviest wild hill stag of which I have reliable evidence weighed 27 st., and carried only six points. The late Lord Lovat mentions a stag, killed by Colonel the Hon. Alastair Fraser in 1876 in the woods near Beaufort, which, quite clean, weighed 30 st. 2 lb.

It is a great pity that an uniform system of weighing cannot be adopted. I do not think that it is possible, for custom dies hard, and the "heart and liver" brigade who prevail in the North will never adopt the practice of weighing without these delicacies, whose retention they defend on the ground of edibility. It does not really matter which system is employed, but much argument would be saved if there were no loophole for criticism. As it is, in one forest a stone is reckoned at 10 lb.; in another at 14 lb.; in one a stone is allowed for any stag left on the hill for a night; next door the head stalker allows nothing, or reckons by means of some complicated system of his own devising; and so it goes on.

I have asked stalkers the weight of a stag and they have replied, "Fifteen stones clean—with heart and liver." Though it is too much to hope for an uniform system of weighing, it ought at least to be made clear that the term "clean" should imply that the stag was weighed *without* heart and liver. All stags are weighed clean in one sense, i.e. that the gralloch has been taken out; but this term should imply that the heart and liver have also been removed. "Quite clean" leaves no room for doubt, and perhaps it is better to use it, though I always take it for granted that unless the word "clean" is used the stag has been weighed with heart and liver.

Some interesting experiments have been made with regard to weights in different forests.

One owner told me that a stag would lose $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. for every stone he weighed

during the first night he was left out; one ounce for every stone the second night, and that on the third night there would be a slight gain.

A letter from Lord Sligo appeared in the *Field* of December 12th, 1923, in which he stated that he had weighed a stag at 11 a.m., when he scaled 18 st. 3 lb. He was allowed to lie on the floor of the larder until 8 p.m., when he was again weighed. He had lost 3 lb. in nine hours.

Following his letter the Duke of Portland wrote to say that he had on several occasions caused stags to be weighed on their arrival at the larder and weighed again on the following morning, after they had been left out in a field all night. "At each, save one, of these tests it was found that the weights were identical. The one exception occurred on an extremely wet night, when a stag weighed about half a pound more after exposure."

The late Henry Evans did not believe that any appreciable difference in weight would become apparent in the case of a stag left out all night, and after the Duke of Portland's experience it is difficult to reconcile conflicting evidence.

Mr. Balfour-Browne conducted some very interesting experiments in an endeavour to devise a rule by which, from measurements of a stag, an approximate weight might be ascertained. He came to the conclusion that it was not possible to frame a reliable formula, as size bore but little relation to weight, the latter seeming to depend far more upon condition. With this I entirely agree, and the season of 1925 furnished some instructive examples. One came under my own notice. I was stalking at Glenkingie, where the feeding is particularly good. My host and I were out together, and I had left him in an endeavour to get in to a stag which was lying in a very exposed and awkward position. Owing to a good approach on the part of the stalker I managed to get the stag, a nice 10-pointer. We were dragging him down to the path, when we saw about twenty stags which my shot had disturbed. They were making up the hill towards the place where he had left my host and a ghillie, among them a very big dark stag which we both picked out as the best of the lot, estimating his weight at about 17 st. As they straggled up the hill a shot rang out, and when they reappeared from behind a knoll, the big stag was no longer with them. That night at dinner, when the weights were brought in to my host, we were both astonished to see the weight of this stag given as 13 st. However, on investigation it proved to be quite correct. The head stalker explained it by saying that some deer were "all stomach," and that when that had been removed there was not much left! Now this was a big-framed stag which we both guessed at about the same weight, and yet we were both entirely wrong. I had many letters from stalkers all over Scotland during this particular season commenting on the same point. Mr. Stanley Garton wrote from Corrickinloch: "A number of big-framed stags were killed, but in most cases weights proved to be a stone or more under experienced estimate."

In 1925 the summer was unusually hot and nearly all the big stags left the low ground, where the feeding was good, and went to the tops in order to avoid the flies. Here the feeding is not so rich, and they were consequently in not nearly so good condition as they would have been had the summer not been dry.

It is a difficult matter to guess the weight of a live stag with anything like accuracy. I am a bad judge myself, and one has to be handling deer constantly to become anything of an expert. I have known stalkers who could constantly guess the weights of deer within a pound or two, but as a rule they are very much out in their estimates.

Roughly speaking, the weight of a stag after the removal of the heart and liver will be about a pound less for every stone. That is, a stag of 14 st. weighed with heart and liver will weigh about 13 st. after these organs have been removed.

The Duke of Portland had one stag weighed three times in order to ascertain—

- (1) His weight on the hill.
- (2) His weight when gralloched, but with heart and liver.
- (3) His clean weight (i.e. without heart and liver).

The first was 19 st. 6 lb.; the second 15 st.; the third 14 st. 2 lb. If a stag is hit in the heart, through effusion of blood his heart and liver will weigh less than if he were hit in another part of the body.

The table on page 150 shows the distribution in weight of a Warnham stag killed September 7th, 1926, for which I am indebted to Captain C. E. Lucas.

The relationship between the growth of a stag's horns and the weather is a never-failing source of argument between stalkers. Granted that good antlers are, in the main, the result of heredity, I am still of the opinion, in spite of the arguments adduced by my friend Mr. Allan Gordon Cameron, for whose knowledge I entertain a great respect, that they are affected by weather (see pp. 152-154).

Park deer and wild deer do not live under similar conditions, it is true; but these conditions are not so dissimilar as to preclude the application to the latter of the results of experiments conducted with the former.

The shed antlers of a number of individual deer at Warnham Court have been preserved, so that it is possible to trace the development of antlers in over thirty Warnham stags from their earliest beginnings. Thanks to the kindness of Captain C. E. Lucas, a large series of these antlers was weighed in May 1926 by Captain Lucas, Professor J. S. Huxley, Professor of Zoology, London University, and the writer. The results were tabulated and analysed by Professor Huxley, and published in full in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society*, 1926. A brief summary of the most interesting results may be given

DEER-STALKING

RED DEER STAG, BORN 1919 (7 YEARS OLD) 14 POINTS.

(Weight of skull and horns, after cleaning skull, 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ lb.)

	lb.	oz.	
Head and horns	25	1	
Head and neck skin	13	2	
Tongue	1	9	
Hoofs and shins (forelegs) } (with	3	12	
Hoofs and legs (hind) } skin on)	4	0	
Body skin	17	4	
Neck	25	14	
Windpipe	1	10	
Testicles, etc.	1	7	
Heart	2	9	
Liver	5	14	
Skirt	1	14	
Lungs	6	0	
Spleen		14	
Kidneys		15	
Suet round kidneys and at back	8	3	
Carcass (less all above)	266	0	
Total	386	0	
	lb.	oz.	
Blood	24	10	
Large paunch with fat adhering	7	14	
Contents of above	26	3	
Small paunch with fat adhering	4	11	
Contents of above	1	7	
Apron	1	14	
Guts with fat adhering	19	12	
Total	86	7	

Weight of beast "clean,"
27 st. 8 lb.

6 st. 2 lb. 7 oz.

Full weight of beast: 33 st. 10 lb. 7 oz.

in Table 1. In addition, it may be noted that the antlers of the famous "Great Warnham Stag" (described by Mr. J. G. Millais) never reached more than 17 lb. (two years before its death).

The greatest decrease in antler-weight recorded in a single year was that of stag E in its last (11th) year, from 18 lb. 4 oz. to 7 lb. (the latter figure obtained after allowing for the skull, the whole skull with antlers only weighing 9 lb. 4 oz.), a decrease of 50.9 per cent. No stag of those with ten or more sets of antlers attained its maximum antler-weight later than its 13th or earlier than its 9th year, and all but one declined in antler-weight after attaining the maximum. This one exception was killed fighting.

The average year of antler-growth for attaining maximum antler-weight was 10.56: actually most stags (6 out of 11) attained the maximum with their 10th pair of antlers.

In addition, two specimens (B and M) which only had nine pairs of antlers

TABLE 1

MEAN ANTLER-WEIGHT AND MEAN PERCENTAGE ANNUAL INCREMENT OF WARMHAM STAGS IN SUCCESSIVE YEARS.

Year of antler-growth. Eleven specimens with continuous records for ten years or more.	1st Weight 1-0 $\frac{2}{3}$ —	2nd 3-13 $\frac{3}{4}$ (+27.5-7)	3rd 6-11 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+74.5)	4th 9-6 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+39.7)	5th 11-2 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+18.8)	6th 11-14 $\frac{1}{2}$ (+6.8)	7th 12-11 $\frac{1}{10}$ (+7.0)	8th 13-6 $\frac{3}{4}$ (+5.3)	9th 13-12 $\frac{1}{16}$ (+2.8)	10th 15-2 $\frac{1}{4}$ (+9.7)	11th —	12th —
Stag with heaviest antlers (K).	Weight 1-5	5-0	6-12	11-15	13-6	13-12	16-10	13-6	17-4	21-0	16-0 ¹	—
	increment %	(+281.0)	(+35.0)	(+76.8)	(+12.0)	(+2.8)	(+20.9)	(-19.6)	(+29.0)	(+21.7)	(-23.8)	—
Stag with lightest antlers, of those which lived ten or more years (F).	Weight 0-12	2-12	8-0	8-4	9-4	11-4	11-4	10-8	12-12	9-8	13-6	9-8 ¹
	increment %	(+267.0)	(+190.9)	(+3.1)	(+12.1)	(+21.6)	(+0)	(-6.7)	(+21.4)	(-25.5)	(+40.8)	(-29.0)
Stag with most rapid growth in first three years (and first four years) of antlers (A).	Weight 0-10	6-4	11-6	12-2	13-12	13-4	13-8	14-6	16-4	14-12	110 wt.) ²	—
	increment %	(+900.0)	(+82.0)	(+6.6)	(+13.4)	(-3.6)	(+1.9)	(+6.4)	(+13.0)	(-9.2)	—	—
Stag with poorest growth in first three years (of those with records for ten or more years (G)).	Weight 0-8	4-12	6-0	9-8	14-12	12-12	13-0	15-8	13-4	19-4	12-4 ¹	—
	increment %	(+850.0)	(+26.3)	(+58.3)	(+55.2)	(-13.6)	(+2.0)	(+19.2)	(-14.5)	(+45.3)	(-36.4)	—

¹ Denotes that allowance has been made for skull, on which antlers were mounted.

² "No weight," since antlers mounted on stuffed head.

showed a decline after reaching a maximum at the 7th and at the 8th pair respectively.

The *percentage* of stags showing decreases in antler-weight increases with age very regularly, thus: 2nd year of antler-growth, 0; 3rd year, 3; 4th year, 0; 5th year, 15; 6th+7th, 30; 8th+9th, 35; 10th+11th, 40; 12th+13th+14th, 71 *per cent* (of the number of stags with records for the year or years in question).

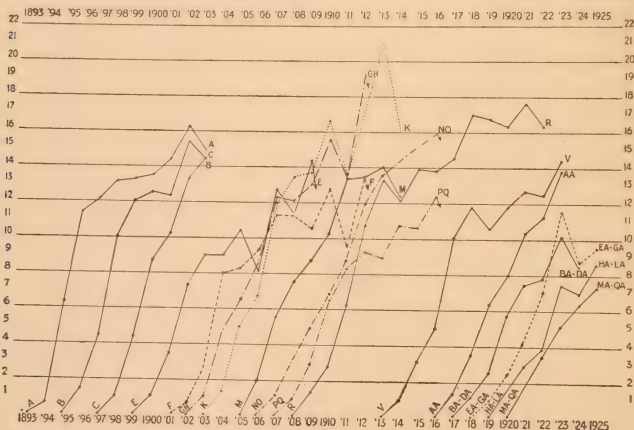


FIG. 1

To indicate the effect of season on antler-growth. The individual antler-series of thirty-three Warnham Court stags (Nos. 1-33, Table I) have been grouped according to date of birth. When more than one animal has been born in one year, the mean for all born in that year has been taken. Downward-pointing arrows indicate marked "going back" in antler-weight, due to old age or disease, the final weight not being plotted: e.g. E, F, and G + H. Sometimes when one of the stags born in the same year has regressed markedly before the other, the final years have not been plotted (e.g. N + O after 1916). Ordinates, weight of antlers in lbs.; abscissa, dates from 1893 to 1925. Note the coincidence of diminutions or increases in growth-rate (in young animals) or in absolute weight (in mature stags) in particular years: e.g. depressions in 1924, 1922, 1911, 1906; favourable effects in 1923, 1921, 1912, 1910, 1907, 1902.—From the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*.

A number of the antler-series were from stags still living; none of these showed nearly such good antler-growth as the better of the earlier deer. This is largely, but not wholly, to be ascribed to the fact that the treatment of the park with bone-meal was discontinued after 1900.

Perhaps, however, the most interesting point with regard to the work has been the establishment of the fact of a very marked effect of season upon antler-growth. It is possible to establish (see Table I, first item) an *average* increment for each year of antler-growth. For each year of each individual stag, the *actual* increment of antler-growth will deviate by a certain

percentage amount, plus or minus, from this average. For each calendar year the sum of all these percentage deviations from the average increase can be added together and an *average deviation* for the year obtained. It is then found that some years are enormously plus, meaning years very favourable to antler-growth; some markedly minus, i.e. very unfavourable.

This is shown graphically in Figs. 1 and 2. For instance, the increase for 1907 was more than 300 per cent above the average; that for 1912 and 1923, 200 per cent and nearly 150 per cent above it respectively; 1906, on the other hand, was over 100 per cent, and 1924, 200 per cent below the average. (It is clear that to be more than 100 per cent below the average increase means that antler-weight in that year will have *decreased* instead of

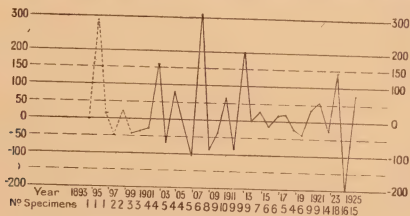


FIG. 2

To indicate the effect of the year on antler-growth of thirty-three Warnham stags (Nos. 1-33, Table I). (1) The percentage increment of each antler-weight over that of the same stag in the previous year was found; (2) the percentage deviation of this increment from the mean increment for all animals of the same age was next calculated; (3) the mean of all the percentage deviations for each particular year was then taken. These means are here plotted for the years from 1894 to 1925. The numbers of individual deviations for each year is given below the year; when there are less than three deviations, dotted lines are employed. On this method, 1923, 1912, 1907, and 1902 (and probably 1895-1 specimen) emerge as very favourable years; and 1924, 1911, 1908, 1906 as very unfavourable.

—From the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London.

increased; to be 200 per cent below the average means that in that year there was an average *decrease* of antler-weight equal to the normal *increase*.)

A similar result can be obtained by noting if the majority of individuals in a particular year showed negative or positive deviations respectively: e.g. in 1923 only two beasts out of eighteen were not positive (i.e. did not show antler-growth above the average); while in 1924 only one out of sixteen did not show antler-growth below the average (i.e. fifteen showed negative deviation). Apparently 1895, 1902, 1907, 1922, and 1923 were highly favourable; while 1904, 1920, 1921, and 1925 were fairly favourable. On the other hand, 1906, 1908, 1911, and especially 1924, were very unfavourable; 1903 and 1919 rather unfavourable.

In 1924 the five animals which were growing their 5th pair of antlers produced antlers actually on the average *less heavy* than those of the year

before. An absolute decrease of average antler-size was also shown by all the 6th-year and 7th-year antlers of 1924.

The conditions favouring antler-growth above the normal appear to be, according to Captain Lucas—

(a) An early rut the year previous.

(b) Good accumulation of reserves of fat between the rut and the beginning of antler-growth. This would be favoured by, e.g. a good beech-mast or acorn year, but would be hindered by a hard winter.

(c) Rich feeding during the period of velvet, especially in its earlier part (April and May). This would at Warnham be given by a good grass crop.

Further facts about the growth of red deer in captivity have been obtained from the records kept at Warnham, in which the weight of every animal killed has been recorded. Table 2 gives the facts for 212 stags. The enormous range of variation is at once apparent, as is, however, also the general regularity.

These stags were almost all killed in late August, September, or early October, i.e. were a few months older than the year given. A very few were killed after the rut, in December or January. It is clearly an accident that a very large beast has sent the four-year-old's average up too high; while that of the five-year-old's is too low, there happening to be no very large or even moderately large beasts killed at this age.

Since on the whole the poorer heads were selected for killing, while the finer heads only have had series of antlers kept, the average body-weights and average antler-weights for each year are not strictly comparable, the antler-weights in Table 1 being thus probably above the average of the weights of the antlers of the beasts in Table 2.

TABLE 2
WEIGHTS AND POINT NUMBERS OF 212 WARNHAM STAGS ARRANGED BY AGE-GROUPS

Age: slightly more than—	No. of specimens	Average clean weight lb. avoiz.	Average weight increment %	Extremes of clean weight lb.	Average number of points	Extremes of point number
1 year	32	144.0	—	97-192	—	—
2 years	44	208.6	44.9	132-270	10.15	6-13
3 "	27	250.6	20.0	154-336	12.26	8-15
4 "	18	316.8	26.5	190-409	14.67	12-18
5 "	13	321.2	1.4	251-366	15.00	12-20
6 "	24	356.3	10.9	245-403	15.81	12-20
7 "	20	363.4	2.0	280-413	17.32	12-24
8 "	8	358.3	—	297-402	17.88	16-23
9 "	6	366.3	—	357-394	21.17	16-26
10 "	7	352.4	—	300-398	19.57	14-23
11 "	8	355.8	—	305-432	18.00	15-24
12 "	3	323.7	—	298-340	16.67	16-18
13 "	—	—	—	—	—	—
14 "	2	298.5	—	288-309	39.50	39-40

Another important point with regard to antler-growth may also be noted. It appears to be the fact that if averages for large numbers of animals are taken, the proportionate or relative weight of the antlers increases with the absolute weight of the stag. This is illustrated by Table 3, which gives the average clean weight and average antler-weight of 527 stags from different parts of Europe, from data assembled by von Dombrowski (and a few by Baillie Grohman), with the addition of data on British stags collected by Professor Huxley, the whole analysed by Professor Huxley. The stags have been grouped into classes by clean weight, and the averages for body-weight and antler-weight found for such classes, e.g. the first average weight, 74.4 kg., is the average for all beasts whose clean weights were between 60 and 80 kg.,

TABLE 3

BODY-WEIGHT, ANTLER-WEIGHT, POINT-NUMBER, AND RELATIVE ANTLER-WEIGHT OF 527 RED DEER SHOT IN VARIOUS PARTS OF EUROPE (392 COLLECTED BY DOMBROWSKI; 10 BY BAILLIE GROHMAN; 125 BY HUXLEY).

Arranged by body-weight classes, all of 20 kg. interval (except the last class, of 40 kg. interval). Note that for Classes 2 to 8 (comprising over 90 per cent of the animals), the relative antler-weight rises steadily with increasing body-weight.

Class No.	Kg.	No. of specimens	Mean body-weight, kg.	Mean antler-weight, kg.	Mean point number	Relative antler-weight % of body
1.	60-80	19	74.4	1.64	7.50	2.20
2.	80-100	119	93.4	2.03	8.20	2.17
3.	100-120	106	110.4	3.16	9.81	2.86
4.	120-140	113	130.6	3.96	11.64	3.03
5.	140-160	65	148.9	4.78	11.74	3.21
6.	160-180	29	170.7	6.21	13.10	3.64
7.	180-200	33	191.1	7.28	14.77	3.81
8.	200-220	18	211.8	8.91	15.41	4.21
9.	220-240	14	231.7	8.79	13.62	3.79
10.	240-280	11	259.1	8.63	13.78	3.33

and the corresponding antler-figure, 1.64 kg., is the average weight of their antlers. The third column gives the average number of points.

The third column gives the relative antler-weight, expressed as a percentage of the clean body-weight. It will be seen that as the average body-weight increases from 93 to 212 kg., the percentage antler-weight increases steadily from 2.2 to 4.2 per cent; i.e. while the animals increase a little more than twice in body-weight, they increase nearly four times in antler-weight.

The relative antler-weight goes down again for the largest stags of all. This is probably due largely to the fact that their great body-weight depends upon exceptional circumstances, such as unusually good condition; and also very likely *exceptional* body-size never permits very large relative size of antler. When analysed, the relation between average clean body-weight and

average antler-weight can be approximately expressed by a simple mathematical formula, $y = bx^k$, where y = antler-weight, x = body-weight, and b and k are constants. Here k is about a little over $\frac{2}{3}$ (1.64). This implies that the growth of the body and of the antlers can be compared to the increase of two sums of money put out at 2 per cent and a little over 3 per cent compound interest respectively.

It should be emphasised that all these figures of von Dombrowski's refer

TABLE 4

MEAN BODY-WEIGHT AND RELATIVE ANTLER-WEIGHT FOR STAGS FROM
DIFFERENT REGIONS OF EUROPE

	Mean body-weight, kg.	Mean relative antler-weight %	No. of specimens
Scotland	95.7	1.65	45
Alsace-Lorraine	103.1	3.03	36
Austrian Alps	108.1	2.82	8
Baden	111.1	3.49	15
Bavaria	117.8	2.50	53
Harz	119.5	2.49	46
Brandenburg	127.0	3.54	11
German Silesia	129.6	4.91	17
Hanover	133.0	2.92	31
England	134.4	1.75	11
Thuringian Forest	135.5	4.81	12
N. Bohemia	136.2	3.52	14
Mecklenburg	(142.7)	(4.30)	4
Algäu (Bavaria)	143.6	2.42	22
Styria	149.8	2.53	9
Hesse	150.8	4.58	16
Central Hungary	(172.0)	(4.55)	4
East Prussia	184.0	3.62	10
Bohemian Forest	(193.8)	(3.36)	5
Hungary (various)	195.0	3.48	13
Pomerania	196.5	3.63	12
Lower Hungary	198.4	3.95	9
Upper Hungary	206.8	4.24	13
Bukovina	234.7	4.20	14

NOTE.—Figures in brackets are from regions with less than eight specimens.

to *adult* deer shot by sportsmen. It is probable, however, that a similar relation between antler-weight and body-weight will be found to hold good also for young growing animals, though very likely k will be larger for them.

There is, of course, a very large range of variation due to food, weather, locality, and heredity; but the averages are perfectly clean in their trend.

Unfortunately, British sportsmen rarely weigh antlers. It would be interesting to complete Dombrowski's figures by including more British

beasts. Professor Huxley writes that he would very much welcome any figures on the subject. Sportsmen should note (1) date and place; (2) clean weight; (3) weight of antlers on frontlet; (4) any notes as to condition, age, etc. For this purpose, poor heads and immature beasts are as important as fine mature animals.

When the averages are taken for the separate regions by which Dom-browski grouped his material, it is found that there are considerable differences in relative antler-weight, even for approximately the same body-weight average (Table 4). However, it is perfectly clear that on the whole the relative antler-weight goes up with increasing average body-weight for the beasts of a particular region; and this is particularly clear when averages are taken for groups of regions (see Table 5).

On the other hand, some of the regions contained enough specimens for Professor Huxley to classify the beasts from a single region in the same way as he had done for the totals, by body-weight classes. He then found the curious

TABLE 5

INCREASE OF RELATIVE ANTLER-WEIGHT WITH INCREASE OF MEAN REGIONAL BODY-WEIGHT

Mean regional body-weight, from :—	80-100	100-120	120-160	160-200	200-240	kg.
Mean of mean regional relative antler-weights	1.65	2.87	3.53	3.77	4.22	%
Number of regions	1	5	10	6	2	

fact that, although two of the sixteen regions thus treated showed increase of percentage antler-weight with increasing body-size, seven showed no change or an irregular change, and five showed a *decrease* of relative antler-weight with an increase of body-weight, or the exact opposite of the general tendency of all the animals together. It was further noticeable that this decrease was shown either by regions with a very high average body-weight (all of which have a very high percentage antler-weight) or by regions of lower average body-weight with, however, unusually high percentage antler-weight. How are we to account for these puzzling facts?

It may be suggested that the data obtained at Warnham throw light upon the question. On the one hand, we have facts concerning body-growth from the average weights of stags killed at different ages. On the other, we have the facts concerning antler-growth, from the series of shed antlers. We can obtain the relative growth of antlers, relative to growth of body, by putting these two sets of figures together. True that the antler-series are not from the same animals which provided the body-weights. But when we compare the body-weights of the animals which provided the antler-series

with the averages of the others, it is seen that there is no significant difference. On the other hand, it is probable, since a series was collected mostly from very fine heads, that the antler-weights will be somewhat above the average.

When we put the two sets of figures together, we find that, as expected from Dombrowski's data on adult deer, the antler-weight does continue to increase with increase of body-weight during all the early years of life, and to increase in close agreement with the simple mathematical formula given above. This effect continues certainly for the first six years of life, possibly for eight or nine. The relative rate of increase (k in the formula) is, however, much larger than that obtained for the adult stags in Dombrowski's data, being over 2.5.

The following suggestion may be made. During the years of rapid growth (corresponding to the years up to about twenty in man) the antlers are growing according to the formula above given, with a high rate of relative increase ($k=2$ or over). Different races and different regions will show somewhat different values of k according both to heredity and to environment, but the principle will be the same in all. This will mean that at the close of the active growth period (say six or perhaps eight years) the relative size of the antlers will stand in a definite proportion to the absolute weight of the body. If the average weight at the end of the active growth period is small, say only about 200 lb., the percentage antler-weight will average small, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. If, on the other hand, it is large, say 400 lb., the average antler-weight will be large, round 4 per cent. If specimens from a small race of deer, like the Scotch, could be transported to where they would find better conditions for early growth, as in parks or in New Zealand, we should expect (1) a greater final body-weight, as indeed we do obtain; and (2) a greater percentage antler-weight. The antler-weights of Warnham stags appear to bear this out, and so do the estimates made by sportsmen of New Zealand stags. Antler-weights of over 20 lb. are recorded from New Zealand. If these represented the same percentage of body-weight as do the antlers of Scotch stags, then the body-weight of New Zealand stags would have to run up to 800 or even 1200 lb., which is out of the question. The opportunity may here be taken of emphasising the interest of obtaining body-weight and antler-weight measurement of New Zealand stags. As the difficulty appears to be one of taking weighing equipment up into the wilds, it may be mentioned that a modified spring balance capable of weighing up to 400 lb., and itself weighing only $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb., is now on the market, and at the modest price of about 4s. 6d. It is called the Outdoor Life Hunting Scale, and may be obtained for one dollar from the Outdoor Life Publishing Co., 1824 Curtis Street, Denver, Colorado, U.S.A. Professor Huxley writes that he has tested one of these, and that it seems very satisfactory.



ROE DEER IN WINTER

From a Drawing by Frank Wallace

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The facts and reasoning so far advanced would explain the difference in relative antler-weight between regions of different average body-weight. It remains to discuss the difficulty about the decreases of relative antler-weight found within certain regions. We must here make one further assumption, viz. that the skeleton as a whole, including the horns, terminates its active growth-period before the body. We all know that that appears to be the case in man. Our bones have finished all growth by twenty-five at latest; but our weight may (and alas! often does) increase after this. The increase

TABLE 6

THE BODY-WEIGHT, ANTLER-WEIGHT, AND POINT-NUMBERS OF 405 ROE DEER, GROUPED BY BODY-WEIGHT CLASSES (FROM DOMBROWSKI'S DATA)

Class	No. of specimens	Mean body-weight, kg.	Mean antler-weight, grams	Mean point number	Relative antler-weight, %
1	4	13.75	237.0	5.25	1.72
2	15	15.0	189.8	6.00	1.27
3	27	16.0	210.7	6.00	1.32
4	33	17.0	209.7	6.00	1.23
5	53	18.0	249.2	5.87	1.38
6	61	19.0	240.6	5.93	1.27
7	64	20.0	240.4	6.13	1.20
8	49	21.0	262.6	6.13	1.25
9	31	22.0	287.2	6.10	1.31
10	28	23.0	263.75	5.89	1.15
11	14	24.0	280.1	6.21	1.17
12	7	25.0	304.7	5.87	1.22
13	14	26.36	274.6	6.14	1.04
14	4	28.5	357.0	6.00	1.25
15	6	34.5	347.5	6.50	1.01
1-5					
(13-18 kg.)	127	16.6	225.7	5.92	1.36
6-12					
(19-25 kg.)	254	20.9	257.0	6.05	1.23
13-15	24	28.3	306.5	6.21	1.08
(26-39 kg.)					

of relative antler-weight with absolute body-weight in Dombrowski's data as a whole would then be due to the fact that most of the differences in body-weight came from our dealing with a mixture of stags from many regions, each with its own average size at the close of active growth. But the differences of body-size within one region would be mainly due either to temporary differences of condition or to that increase of body-weight in mature years which we have just seen reason to suppose would not be accompanied by further increase of antler-size. The differences between different regions in this respect would then be largely due to differences in the time at which

the skeleton stopped growing. In addition, some animals would put more material into antler, others more into flesh (in other words, the size of k in the formula would, if it varied at all, tend to vary inversely as the rate of body-growth), and this would make the largest beasts of each region have small antlers for their size.

TABLE 7

THE SAME DATA AS IN TABLE 6, BUT GROUPED BY GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS
REGIONS WITH LESS THAN 7 SPECIMENS ARE IN BRACKETS

Region	No. of specimens	Mean body, kg.	Mean antler, g.	Relative antler-weight, %	
IV	30	21.77	269.7	1.24	East Prussia.
V	15	22.93	253.9	1.11	West Prussia.
VI-VII	14	21.21	259.1	1.22	Posen.
IX	(1)	34.0	280.0	.82)	Galicia.
XI	43	21.30	323.0	1.52	Hungary.
XII	(4)	23.0	201.3	.872)	Transylvania.
XIII	(4)	25.0	289.8	1.16)	South Hungary.
XIV	38	20.2	271.7	1.34	German Silesia.
XV	18	19.8	209.8	1.06	Brandenburg.
XVIa	(2)	22.5	310.0	1.38)	Pomerania.
XVIb	(2)	18.5	255.0	1.38)	Mecklenburg.
XVII-XVIII	18	17.9	220.8	1.23	Saxony (Kingdom).
XIX	34	20.6	288.8	1.40	Bohemia.
XXI	31	19.3	181.6	.94	Moravia.
XXII	(4)	22.75	274.5	1.21)	Lower Austria.
XXIV	10	21.10	260.0	1.24	Salzburg.
XXV	9	18.56	170.4	.92	Styria.
XXVI	7	18.57	232.1	1.25	Carinthia.
XXVII	(2)	18.0	300.0	1.67)	Tyrol.
XXX	(2)	26.50	269.0	1.02)	Slavonia.
XXXI	(6)	26.83	268.3	1.00)	Bosnia.
XXXII	7	16.57	177.7	1.07	{ Saxony
XXXIII	15	19.47	242.3	1.25	{ (Province).
XXXIV	24	19.54	235.2	1.20	Brunswick.
XXXIX	(4)	19.50	320.0	1.64)	Oldenburg.
XL	18	18.44	199.9	1.08	Hanover.
XLI	43	18.49	220.6	1.19	Hesse.

ROE DEER

Dombrowski has also collected large bodies of facts about roe deer. These have been analysed in the same way as those for red deer, and the results may be presented here rather than in the section devoted to roe, as they form a continuation of the researches conducted by Professor Huxley (Tables 6-8). We need only stress a few points: (1) The relative antler-weight is always low (below 2.0 %), in accordance with the small absolute body-weight;

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(2) the relative antler-weight does not increase with increasing body-weight, but falls off slightly; (3) the point-number hardly increases at all with increasing body-weight, but remains almost exactly 6. We must suppose that the small antlers of the roe deer, which are certainly of unusual type in being so small and in normally not going above six points, are adaptations to a life in thickets, and that the disproportion between their growth and that of the body is definitely checked at a comparatively early age, probably about three years.

TABLE 8

ROE DEER (DOMBROWSKI'S DATA)

Relative antler-weight values for various regions grouped by body-weight classes. Figures in brackets include values for regions for which six specimens or less are available. These are excluded from the figures not in brackets. A slight increase of relative antler-weight with average body-weight is to be seen, followed by a fall.

Body-weight class	No. of regions	Mean relative antler-weight			
16 kg.	1	1.07	—	}	1.12 (1.22)
17	1	1.23	—		
18	4 (1)	1.11	(1.24)		
19	4 (1)	1.11	(1.22)	}	1.20 (1.26)
20	2	1.37	—		
21	3 (1)	1.33	(1.30)	}	1.27 (1.27)
22	2 (1)	1.18	(1.24)		
23-24	(5)	—	(0.97)		

CHAPTER XXIX

SOME HINTS ON STALKING

"Many young Hunters which understand not the cause are oftentimes beguiled . . . therefore they ought to looke well aboute them."—GEORGE TURBERVILLE.

THE argument most frequently used by those who decry stalking in Scotland is that they have no personal share in the sport beyond the actual shot. This is, to some extent, justifiable criticism; but many of those who make use of it would never get anywhere near a stag if they were left to their own devices.

There is a vast difference between going out with a professional stalker and going out by oneself. Most men who write about stalking treat it from the former point of view, as is bound to be the case. Stalking for yourself is all very well in a place where no marches exist, but in Scotland a false move might disturb the ground for miles and stop all stalking for some days. Consequently you must consider your neighbours. If you own a forest yourself, and know it thoroughly, it is a different matter; but if you are a guest it is far better and safer to go out under the guidance of a regular stalker.

That the worth of a stalker's trophies does not rest entirely on comparative values is a circumstance for which we should all be thankful. Were it so, there would be but few satisfied men in Scotland by October 15th. Doubtless the best head, the nearest approach to a perfect royal, will hang in the place of honour, but its owner's eyes will turn as often to the shabby 6-pointer, whose death first introduced him to the delights sung by Scrope with such enthusiasm; or to that other head which he, for the first time, alone and unaided, despatched to the happy hunting grounds.

A day with a professional is one of the greatest treats which fall to my lot, and many of those whose friendship I value most are Highland stalkers. They look at life from a cleaner and more refreshing standpoint than a townsman, and possess in many instances a poetic appreciation and a refined understanding which is the heritage of those whose days are passed amid the everlasting hills. Often their thoughts are clothed in picturesque, almost Biblical language. Such an one was he who, speaking of some old stag that he had known for long, told his master that it had, one hard winter, "got leave to die." Such an one was he, too, who wrote of "the sweet brown

princess of the mountain," and "the white dawn melting in the sun, while the red deer cried around." To the casual stranger such men are, perhaps, dour, unsympathetic Highlanders. Melt their reserve, win their confidence and their love, and you have something worth the getting.

A day with such a man is to me real enjoyment. In his company one's attention need not be wholly engrossed by the business in hand. There is time to linger over the purple shadows on the mountains, the gleam of sun on a distant strath, and the thousand and one details which go to the making of a day on the hill. To pit one's skill against the alert senses of a wild animal, to defeat him on his own ground, especially in mountainous country, is the highest form of stalking and productive of the greatest enjoyment to the stalker. The man who is stalking alone has to make up his mind in a second. Personally, not being blessed with the best of sight, I think stalking alone during the early part of the season presents more difficulties than later in the year. The stags are all together; hence it is a much harder matter to pick out the best head than when one lordly male proclaims his superiority to an admiring circle of hornless females. Such a stag is not easily alarmed, and if suspicious may put down the uneasy movements of a hind to the manoeuvres of a rival. Unless your beast has some noticeable peculiarity, such as a very light or a very dark skin, it is often hard to pick him out from ten or a dozen others. Then, too, he will almost invariably secrete the vital portions of his body behind the anatomy of an extraordinarily unattractive knobber. This latter animal usually persists in thrusting himself to the fore throughout the day, until you get to hate the very sight of him.

Deer are often much more restless towards October, and move suddenly and unaccountably just as your stalk seems on the verge of success. When deer are uneasy and the stag is surrounded by a large harem of watchful hinds, it is bad policy to get into such a position that retreat is difficult. The outlying deer may be moved and feed right on top of you, in which case the game is up. At times such a position is unavoidable, and all you can do is to go boldly on and trust to luck that the stag will move your way. It is impossible to generalise. Every stalk is different, and the individual must make up his mind in a moment, which is one of the reasons that make the sport so fascinating. The comfortable feeling which pervades you as the stalker announces that he is "seeing beasts" cannot be compared with the thrill which permeates your being as your own glass focuses those red-brown specks a mile or more away. Nor can the moment when the stalker hisses that you should "Tak' him noo!" vie with the sensation you experience as the big stag you have worked for all day stretches himself in the centre of his herd of hinds and begins to move slowly towards you as you lie, peat stained, on the hillside. Perchance a coy charmer minces provocatively across his path, to be sent flying with a headlong grunting charge. Perhaps

a young stag irritates him with reiterated roars. The distance between you is lessened by a hundred yards. Then comes the moment when you stake your all on the steadiness of hand and eye. It may be that that indescribable thud and desperate plunge bring joy to your heart, or the long, wailing whine of a misdirected bullet sings a dirge over the back of your uninjured quarry.

I have had the good fortune at various times to stalk many beasts on my own account, and so many points arise which do not strike one when out under a professional, that a few of my impressions may be of benefit to others. Anyone who has ever killed a stag by his own unaided efforts will, I think, agree with me in saying that a stag thus killed is worth half a dozen obtained with the aid of a regular stalker. A man may have been out dozens of times in the usual way and consider himself quite competent to undertake a stalk on his own, as indeed he may be. Still, if he were put down alone in the middle of a forest, even on ground he knew, I venture to prophesy that in nine cases out of ten he would make several mistakes before "getting in," if he did so at all.

There is a good story of a man who thought he knew everything there was to know about stalking, though in reality he knew very little. Having killed one stag in the morning with a stalker, he announced his intention of stalking for the rest of the day himself. The stalker was to carry the rifle and answer questions, but was forbidden to volunteer remarks on his own account. The expert found a stag later in the day which he proceeded to stalk, his follower carrying out the directions which he had been given. About three o'clock, to his own delight, the former found himself lying comfortably behind a rock within shot of his quarry, which was lying down. He proceeded to eat his lunch, keeping a wary eye on the beast.

About four-thirty he remarked to the stalker, "This stag's a long time getting up."

Stalker: "Ay! He will be verra long in rising."

5 p.m. Above remarks repeated.

5.30 p.m. Ditto.

6 p.m. Ditto.

Exasperated sportsman: "What the devil do you mean?"

Stalker: "He will be long rising, because he is deid!" Tableau!

It was the stag he had killed in the morning! So when alone make certain of the stag you are stalking.

Almost the greatest difficulty which the solitary stalker has at first to contend with is the exact location of his beast. This may seem extraordinary to anyone who has never seen wild animals outside a park. A fine fat stag, bright red in colour, on an open hillside should prove a sufficiently conspicuous object, but he blends in marvellously with his surroundings. Should he take it into his head to lie down there is nothing much to be seen, save

his branching antlers, which might very well be passed over at a distance. Stones and landmarks, again, have an awkward habit of changing their appearance and contour as they are approached, and appear unrecognisable near by. A whole herd of deer will disappear on broken ground in the most mysterious manner, and the lie of the land should be carefully studied before beginning the stalk.

The first thing to do after having found your beast is to make sure of your marks. Fix some conspicuous object, a peculiarly shaped stone or anything of the sort will do, and have a thorough good look at it. It will appear totally different at close quarters and probably be quite unrecognisable save to a trained eye, so take its relative position with regard to some other object.

If the deer are a long way off at the first spy, it is always more satisfactory to arrange the stalk in such a way that a good view of them is obtained before the final approach. The stag's head can thus be properly studied, and by a closer view some distinguishing mark can be noted. Such a characteristic is often very useful if the deer bunch or when only a hurried snap-shot is obtained. Spy all over the ground two or three times, so as to make sure there are no hinds and calves lying in unexposed corners of the route you intend taking, and when you have once started keep on testing the wind to make sure that that does not betray you. The easiest and quickest way is to pick a bit of fluff off your coat and see which way it blows. But, whatever you do, avoid being guided by this alone. Carefully watch the clouds, which are the best wind chart you can have; that will be the quarter to study, although the formation of the ground will make eddies and currents of which you may be totally unaware. It is the knowledge of when to avoid and where to disregard these currents which goes a long way towards making a successful stalker; and it is for this reason that in a typical Scottish forest you must know the ground so thoroughly well to be successful. For if you do run across one of these eddies unwittingly, it will give you away in the most uncompromising manner. The deer know these places quite well, and are often to be found lying there. In them, be your care never so great, or your stalks as crafty as ever you can make them, they will "pick you up" and send you back to the lodge in a bad temper. I am thinking of one such place in particular. Granted certain conditions of the wind, you are sure to find the deer there. It consists of a corrie, more or less horseshoe in shape, the west side sheltered by a big knoll with some rough, broken ground at the top on which grow a few stunted and wind-twisted birch trees. Juniper bushes find a precarious root-hold amid their gnarled stems, and down the centre of the corrie tinkles a burn. The east side is made up of a series of knolls thick with heather at the bottom, but gradually getting more barren and rocky as their height increases. The deer generally lie about the birches, from which they get a good view of a big four-fifths of the ground. You

cannot get in from the back or sides, so whilst they remain in that particular spot they are safe. The only thing to be done is to go through the farce of making a stalk, and trust to luck to their moving into a better position. The first time I stalked deer in this corrie I made a detour of about two miles and came in on them from the top. The wind was south-west, and I thought that by sacrificing my hands and knees for some distance I should just manage to get a shot.

There was snow on the ground, which did not add to the pleasures of "craaling," but I persevered, and slowly and carefully made my way to the rock from which I hoped to see them. (By the way, when stalking in snow, have straps on your sleeves, so that they can be tightly buttoned round the wrists to prevent the snow getting up.) Arrived there, I gradually raised my head until a clear view of the whole corrie was before me. It was indeed clear; not a beast was in sight! I thought at the time that, in spite of all my care, they must have got a glimpse of me. Now I know that by some tortuous and unsuspected channel a whiff of tainted air must have carried its message to them. On a second occasion I was more successful. The deer were feeding rather lower down, and I managed to approach them from above and get close enough for a shot. It seems that just that one spot by the birches is the dangerous place, though the whole of the west face is very bad unless the wind is north. There is one thing which always puzzles a beginner and which only practice can teach him. That is, to pick out quickly and surely the best stag of the lot. It is absolutely essential that you should be able to do this rapidly, and for the purpose I have found a monoele Zeiss glass very useful. You can sling it round your neck or keep it loose in a pocket and get at it in a second. Of course, if you have the time and opportunity to pull out a telescope, so much the better, as the Zeiss, though extremely powerful, has a small field. Still, in wood-stalking, especially, they are most useful.

Go and watch deer at every chance you get, even if they are in a park, and pick out the best one, and then the second best, and so on. Nothing is more deceptive than a stag's head when seen through a glass, and if you should happen to see this head on a skyline or against a background of snow, the deception is doubly intensified. I have always found myself that one of the most difficult parts of a stalk, when there were many deer together, consisted in picking out the right beast. Of course, if they were all good shootable beasts, you are pretty safe whichever one you take. But suppose they are a mixed lot. You may perhaps have had a long and tiring crawl and the beast whose position you have marked has moved. By the time you have got your glass out the deer have seen a tiny suspicious movement and are on the alert. It is hard for anyone to pick the best beast when they are passing and recrossing each other, and may move off any minute. If you

cannot satisfy yourself that there is a really shootable beast there, it is better not to fire at all than to run the risk of killing a young promising stag. It gives you no pleasure, and you only blame yourself afterwards.

I may perhaps be allowed to recall another matter which is often a bone of contention between stalker and gentleman, and which is the cause of many a qualm when stalking alone. It may be summed up in the question, "Shall I take him lying?" I think it is a question which the individual must decide for himself from a knowledge of his own temperament. Some men can sit and wait comfortably, or uncomfortably, as the nature of the ground permits, for an hour or more till their beast rises, and then kill him with the utmost sang-froid. Others would miss to a certainty if they waited; whilst if they took him lying as soon as they recovered their wind, the result would probably be a bull's-eye. Therefore, when stalking alone, my advice is, "Use your own judgment." A stag's neck when he is lying down at one hundred yards distant is not a good mark, but at the same time, if he has a really good head, you may be so jumpy by the time he rises that your bullet will hum sweetly over or under him. In either case, if you miss him you will be certain to blame yourself for not having chosen the alternative. If you do fire when he is lying, aim at the neck, as in that case you will kill him clean without making a mess of the venison, or miss him clean. In the latter event, with any luck you will get a second chance when he rises.

A bold stalker is often the best. The best stalker I know is also the most daring. Several times, when another man would have gone perhaps a mile or so round, by a bold bit of stalking he has saved hours. But to do this sort of thing you must know the ground like a book and have great confidence in yourself. Still, I think that in stalking, as in many other things, a bold move will pay you. I remember once crawling in on some deer I could not otherwise have got near, under cover of a heavy snow shower. I missed my shot, but I should not have got one at all if I had not risked a certain amount.

One thing I was always very chary of doing when I first started stalking, and that was of showing myself. Caution is all very well, but I think that this is an exaggerated error into which most beginners fall. If you are in a cramped and uncomfortable position, do not be afraid to risk showing a little more of your head. Slow and careful movements will not alarm the deer to such an extent that they will bolt at once, and a change of position may make all the difference to the result of your shot.

Perhaps the most important point to be attended to, which I have left until last, is the spying. It is extraordinary at first how deer are passed over, so well do their coats harmonise with the lovely colourings among which they live. Look well into every sheltered nook and hillside, never leaving anything to chance, and never, never pass your glass carelessly over a bit of

hill simply because you have not seen deer there before. To use a glass properly requires a certain amount of practice. Personally I never move without one. A glass adds enormously to one's enjoyment whatever one is doing, whether grouse shooting or merely out for a walk, and I have always found that I have regretted its absence whenever I have left it behind.

It is always better, if possible, to make the stalk from above. Deer lie looking downhill, and but seldom look directly up unless their attention has been aroused. At times, however, an uphill stalk is inevitable, in which case very great care is necessary. When in view of deer proceed very slowly, and avoid lateral movements as much as possible. These are always more conspicuous than an advance in one direction.

In most thickly wooded countries stalking is carried on during the rutting season, and the sportsman is guided to his quarry by the roar. There is a great element of chance about such sport, for the odds are that a hind will be "jumped." The wind is generally variable in a wood, and chops and changes in the most disconcerting manner. Hinds conceal themselves in unexpected hollows and suddenly dash off, scattering everything before them. However great one's care, such traps are unavoidable. Still it is most exciting work, and keeps the stalker in a state of great nervous tension all the time.

Modern small-bore rifles have rendered stalking an easier matter than it used to be. It is the last hundred yards that is usually the difficulty. It is only a bad stalker who will scamp the last and most exciting bit of the stalk; and a bad sportsman who will take a shot at 300 yards when care and patience would reduce it to 100. Records of hits at 600 and 700 yards make no mention of those other shots at a similar distance which either miss or send a poor wounded brute to die in misery in some peat hag.

"To travel hopefully," says Stevenson, "is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour." It is a patient, careful stalk, maybe occupying hours, successful or not, as the case may be, which lingers in the memory, not a long shot taken to eliminate a tiring stalk and further trouble on the part of the stalker.

There are certain elementary points which perhaps I may be forgiven for mentioning.

Always take plenty of cartridges and carry some, at any rate, yourself. A good stalker will always ask before the start if his "gentleman" has the right cartridges.

Do not be afraid to load the rifle when you are once on your beat: you never know when you may want it.

Have the rifle out of its cover when getting near your deer, and do not get one of the ordinary gunmaker's covers which are made of flimsy material. Most rifle covers are made much too tight, and it is impossible to withdraw the rifle in a hurry.

The best cover I have ever had was made to my own design and is at least 3 inches wide at the end of the barrel and about 7 inches at the butt. It fastens with a large button—not a strap—and the rifle can be drawn out in a second.

If you have an ivory bead on your foresight—and I think they are the best so long as no oil is allowed to discolour them—always cover it with a leather sight protector.

To ascertain where a stag is hit is not easy, and many stalkers will exclaim, "Beyond him!" "Over him!" when in reality the bullet from a modern rifle has gone right through him; they should not do so, but very often do.

The following points are worth bearing in mind in this connection:—

If hit in the heart, a stag will jump forwards and upwards as a rule, or hunch himself up and give a bound. He will do any of these things if hit low behind the foreleg or if his foreleg is broken. When hit in the heart, a stag will often gallop furiously for some distance before falling. If hit in the body, he will sometimes drop his hind quarters and will certainly do so if hit high and his spine is broken.

Hit high in the withers, he will drop instantly, and this is the shot to beware of. I have lost more than one stag in this way. If a stag drops instantly to the shot, reload at once and go in as quickly as you can. If he starts to struggle and rises, be prepared for the first that chance offers, as he will usually start, stern on, at a staggering walk which becomes stronger and stronger, until he vanishes over the skyline. I have seldom known a stag hit in this manner give a broadside chance, and never a standing one. Hit in the neck, a stag will often drop at once, but not, of course, if it is only a flesh wound.

A stag hit through the stomach cringes, humps his back, and may walk slowly or even trot. The latter will not last long, and the wounded animal usually stands with his head down, looking very sick, and will lie up before long.

If hit in the foreleg below the knee, a stag will not travel so far as one with a leg broken near the shoulder. If hit in the foreleg, a stag will go uphill; and, if in the hindleg, downhill, unless he is forced; the latter qualification it is well to remember.

On a very cold windy day last season I had lain waiting for a shot at a stag which was feeding among some peat hags. After twenty minutes or so, by which time I was thoroughly numbed, he gave me a chance. The light was bad, but I hit him and he galloped off downhill and presently lay down, but with his head constantly turning. We followed him, and by crawling into a deep hag managed to get in. It is never a good thing to get too close to a deer unless you know that he is badly wounded, but in this case there was no alternative. I could see the tips of his horns within ten yards of me

as I crouched below the bank, and was just preparing gently to poke the rifle over the top when the stalker, who was closer to him than I was, raised his head. The stag instantly sprang to his feet and was out of sight before I got to the top of the bank. The incident is instructive as showing how very much better it would have been had I got up to the stag without the stalker, as I should have been ready to fire, even though he had only given me a snap; and also illustrates the danger, as I have said, of getting too close to a wounded animal when you are not sure of the nature of his injury. I never saw this stag again.

Target practice is useful when one first starts rifle shooting. It teaches the novice how to hold a rifle and to aim, but beyond that it is not of great value when it comes to game shooting. The budding stalker will find it very much more useful to go to the hill and pick out rocks, judging the distance for himself, before firing, and pacing it afterwards to see how accurate was his estimate. Anyone who has gained his experience in such a way would make much better practice at a stag on his first stalk than one who had been accustomed to a black bull's-eye on a white ground appearing just over the top of his foresight.

But, above all, whatever mark you practice at, adopt any and every position, particularly "off the shoulder," when standing. If you can kill a stag from this position you need never be afraid of your shot. It is the sportsman "who never misses," because he never fires unless the stag is broadside on, standing still, in a good light and within a hundred yards, he himself being comfortably behind a knoll, with no long grass to impede his vision and with a good rest, who loses half the pleasure of stalking.

I dislike lying down to shoot, though I know most stalkers prefer it. You are generally cramped and, if you want to take a second shot, are often awkwardly placed. By far the most useful and easy position, to my mind, is sitting down with the elbows resting on each knee. Such a shot cannot always be obtained, which is why it is so necessary to be at home with any kind of position, but when it can, I always adopt it. One has unfettered control of one's weapon and a clear view of everything around. It is useless, of course, for an uphill shot.

I do not propose to enter on any discussion as regards rifles. Everyone has his own particular choice, and it is almost entirely a matter of habit.

One does not often have to gralloch a deer, but it is useful to know how to do it. Having once seen it performed by an expert, it presents few difficulties. These, should I attempt to describe the rites on paper, would probably appear magnified. Practitioners vary greatly. I have known stalkers plunge at the unfortunate stag as if their one object was to tear it in pieces by main force, cover themselves with blood, and render the onlooker rather disgusted with the whole business. On the Continent the performance

is hedged with certain ceremonies ; nor should the operator allow blood to appear on his shirt-sleeves or coat. I have known many stalkers who could gallooh in this way, cleanly and expeditiously removing what was necessary, even to the extraction of the windpipe.

"The Apron," as the fat covering the stomach is sometimes called, is much valued by some stalkers.

To many, much that I have written in this chapter—or, indeed, volume !—is an old tale ; the best that I can hope is that old memories and happy ones will be revived. To others, who have yet to kill their first stag, it may, perhaps, be of some little help. At any rate, I like to think so. Those who love the deer are heirs to a goodly heritage, and though they may have many regrets, these, as years increase, the lengthening pages of their game books will not hold. In a Highland churchyard there is an epitaph which reads as follows : "He was a true friend, a sincere Christian and the best deerstalker in Lochaber." The shade of many a greater man might have been satisfied with a lesser memorial !

CHAPTER XXX

HINDS AND HIND-STALKING

"'Tis the light headed hind
With sharp-pointed nostril
Keen searching the wind,"

DONNACHADH BAN.

DEER-STALKING, in the proper sense of the term, finishes not later than October 15th; and, though that date ends the most enjoyable time in the year, the sportsman who is lucky enough to remain in Scotland has still many varieties of sport which he can enjoy. The wily duck may thwart his efforts by the reed-fringed loch, or, on his return to the south, call up pleasant memories of darkling stubble fields and that right and left over the larch clump. Black-game collect on the fringe of the moor and stand, black and conspicuous, on brown knolls beyond the cultivated land. Satisfied, they swing, swift and silent raiders, over the grey stone dyke, and he will be fortunate who obtains half a dozen shots in an afternoon, for no bird is so wary of danger. But they will be shots to remember, and an old cock in winter plumage is a prize worth getting. Woodcock lie among the red bracken under the oaks and twist low among the birches, while the white sterns of roe flash and bob over the rough hillside. As the year grows old and the high tops are crowned with snow, the hoarse roar of some late stag grows rarer, and the hinds, now masterless, collect in the lower glens. Once again the keen stalker can indulge in his favourite pursuit. No longer will he experience that thrill of excitement as his glass lights on a herd of deer as to whether he is at last in view of *the* stag of his dreams, that monarch whose horns will throw all predecessors in the shade; merely is it a question as to which of those red-brown forms is the most suitable for venison. On the other hand, in the event of an unsuccessful stalk he does not entertain the same sense of loss, for one hind is very much like another.

After the first heavy snow the sport becomes more arduous, and during a hard frost hind-stalking is really hard work. In bright sun with a clear blue sky it is intensely exhilarating, in spite of the cold, but the position of the herd and local conditions must be favourable for a shot to be obtained in such weather. Not only is the sight of deer as good, if not superior, to



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that of a human being, but their acute hearing, though the stalker is hidden, warns them of his approach on the frozen snow long before he is within reasonable shot. The backward glances of the last of the herd retreating over a ridge more often than not is his only reward on reaching the knoll from which he hoped to obtain a shot. Long shots at what a stalker of my acquaintance used to call "a parrticularly desirable staag" may be excused under certain circumstances, though such shots, vaunted in the local press, are usually the apology for bad stalking. At hinds long shots are far less to be condoned; there is no trophy to be won, and a second chance is more readily obtained.

When snow lies in patches, though the stalk itself may be more successful, deer are very much harder to find, and the eye becomes easily wearied and confused. I have known deer distributed all over such ground remain undetected until movement revealed them. When shooting at objects against a white background the tendency is to shoot low, as the object appears nearer than it really is. When stalking in cold weather, another fault to guard against is "pulling off" as one's hands become numb. It is a point worth remembering and not difficult to forget. The beauty of the surroundings does much to compensate for the difficulties in getting a shot when hind-stalking in snow, and it is a fine sight to see a herd of deer galloping through a loose drift, white clouds flying on every side and catching all the colours of the rainbow in the clear atmosphere. In rough weather, when the hills are shrouded in mist and whirling snowstorms blot out everything beyond a few hundred yards, deer are to be found low down in the glens and keeping to the woods, when possible, for shelter. Stalking under these conditions, severe enough at all times, becomes easier once the game has been seen. Spying, however, is difficult, if not impossible, and luck has to enter largely into one's calculations. Freshly fallen snow gives the stalker a much better chance of a silent approach, though the end of the stalk is endured rather than enjoyed. It is best to keep the rifle in its cover until the very last moment, for it is annoying to find the bolt or muzzle covered with loose snow just as one wants to fire. Great care is necessary also when moving forward for the shot, lest any snow has got down the barrel.

Those who were most intimately acquainted with the conditions prevailing in the great majority of deer forests prior to 1914 were of the opinion that not enough hinds were killed. This criticism must now be largely modified, though such killing as was done for the purpose of obtaining venison during the war was often very ill conducted. Nor is this to be wondered at when local conditions are taken into account. The stalker on a given forest was told to supply so many hinds. Transport was extremely difficult, and men and ponies scarce. What was the result? He went out to the nearest place where he knew

deer were to be found, usually not far from the lodge, and killed the necessary number. In consequence, on some forests of which I have personal knowledge, ground which before the war was considered the best beat, now holds hardly any deer, while the far beats are more or less normal. Such beats, no doubt, could still stand the loss of a good many more hinds than are actually killed, but such forests, generally speaking, have suffered severely.

Deer exhibit great wiliness at times, though their cunning is more often displayed when they are being hunted than when stalked. On the sudden appearance of a man I have known a hind squat suddenly and stretch her neck full length along the ground, allowing the intruder to pass comparatively close. I have also seen stags displaying this same characteristic of a woodland ancestry. A rather peculiar incident occurred recently when my brother and I were stalking some hinds. We had just crossed a wire fence when we heard a squeaking noise, and a calf came trotting up to within twenty yards of us. We stopped, and it advanced a few steps. Not until I walked towards it did it move off, and it then stood on the hillside within easy shot and watched us. Eventually it joined the hinds we were stalking.

The policy of killing only yeld hinds has often been criticised, and the habitual killing of numbers of such animals, though hallowed by custom and the desire for the best venison, cannot do stock any good. I am convinced that the proper policy would be to kill the scraggy old hinds and *their calves*, though such a course may seem brutal. It would, however, rid the ground of beasts which would be of the least use for stock purposes.

It is not an easy matter to pick out the best stag in a herd. To select the most suitable hind for shooting is more difficult by far. The late Lord Lovat described as "probable yeld hinds" those with blue slate-coloured, sleek coats, and light in the flank. To thin the stock he advises taking "the little shrunken-looking old ones, ragged and red in the coat. They are, at all events, useless and well out of the way."

Few owners seem to realise that the thinning of hinds is every whit as important as selecting the right stags to be killed. I have killed a good many hinds during the past twenty years, and, speaking from memory, I should say that at least 85 per cent of the so-called "yeld" hinds carried stag calves. This estimate is confirmed by other stalkers. A very experienced stalker, killing hinds last winter, told me that the only three hinds he killed, which had calves following them, all carried hind calves. It may have been a coincidence, but it would be interesting to have reliable data with regard to this point.

One of the chief drawbacks of hind-stalking is that the days are so short. You cannot start much before nine o'clock, and it is often dark by four, so that unless you have someone to talk to in the evenings, or plenty of resources

of your own to fall back on, it may be a bit dull. Another great element in success, more so now than at another period of the year, is the weather. Deep snow or mist, or even wind, may stop your sport altogether. It does not even follow that clear, bright, frosty weather will in any way help you. It is true that you can spy the deer a very long way off, looking, as a rule, singularly forlorn; but they also can see you, and, if the snow be frozen hard, hear you, before you get within anything like range. An approach, quite easy at other times, is often impossible with snow on the ground.

I remember one day I had years ago. The hills were mantled in white; the sun shone from a clear sky, making everything scintillate and sparkle in its rays; a breath of the keen, frosty air was like a glass of champagne; everything was fresh and beautiful, and yet I only had one shot, although there were plenty of deer on the ground. The next day you could not see thirty yards in front of you. Strange, wind-swept shapes came from beyond a grey sky, tearing along the topmost ridges like the horses of the Valkyries, or howled down the glen with the cry of a lost soul. I had almost made up my mind to stay indoors with a fire, when I thought of the soft, newly-fallen snow, and went. That day I shot five hinds, all within a mile of the house. Yet, perhaps, a clear bright day, when you can see the beautiful white hills stretching before and behind and away on every side leaves behind it more pleasant memories, even though your sport be poor. There is a charm in each which one must know to appreciate. It is a strange, almost uncanny, sensation to walk through a great silent birch wood in midwinter. The only forms one can be certain of are the closest trees, and even they seem unreal and ghostlike. Formless shadows loom suddenly on the uncertain skyline, in reality distant only a few yards. The soft snow deadens and hushes everything. Even the rabbits, usually so perky and full of fun, seem half awed, and scuttle hesitatingly to the cover of a grey rock by the wayside as you pass. A covey of grouse flash through the mist and are gone before you realise that they were there, or an old blackcock flops heavily out of a tree, marking his exit by a cascade of snow. A wreath of mist swirls aside, and dimly you see a string of gaunt, noiseless forms threading the tree trunks. The next minute the curtain descends, and you are once more left staring into a cloud of rolling vapour. Unwittingly you may stumble across that dim procession once again and, if you are quick, get a shot; or, which is more likely, the hoarse bark of a hind may come on you suddenly, causing you to give a guilty start as you peer eagerly around. Although it is most exciting, this following the deer, there are occasions on which pity is the predominant feeling in the mind of the stalker. Never is this more the case than in winter. The deer seem to have lost their alert, watchful look, and as you see the long black line struggling painfully through the deep drifts you ask yourself for a moment if this killing, sport though it may be, is right.

No such qualms, however, trouble your stalker. With him it is usually "that dommed auld beast o' a hind."

Most stalkers are allowed two hinds each for the winter, which they go out and kill for themselves. Naturally they kill the best for meat, and, though the death of half a dozen of the best hinds in a forest will not seriously affect the stock, I am certain that if more attention was paid to the killing of hinds and the matter was really studied, the benefit to the majority of forests would be unquestionable.

I have seen hinds playing and gambolling like lambs in the spring, kicking their heels in the air and jumping and wriggling their bodies in an absurd manner. They will often, too, roll in pools and peat hags like stags.

An angry hind will assume a most vicious expression, grinding her teeth and looking the personification of rage and fury. When jostled by other deer or hustled over rough country they will, as I have already mentioned, strike out savagely with their forefeet, and it is common to see two hinds rear up on their hind legs and spar at each other in this manner. When in such an attitude the ears are usually depressed. More rarely I have seen hinds actually bite other deer, both hinds and calves, though never stags. Stags will butt savagely if jostled by other deer, and their brow points are sometimes quite red with the blood of their companions.

When they drop their calves—which they do in May or June—the hinds cover the little creatures and go away by themselves, sometimes for several hours.

Salmon, Mr. Lucas's keeper at Warnham Court, who takes great interest in anything connected with deer, told me that before the war when Warnham Court hinds were hunted locally, such hinds often had two calves, which he attributed to their good condition. Twins have been known in Scotland, but they are unusual. My old friend Archie Campbell, with whom I have killed more deer than with any other stalker, considers that if a hind is shot in the early part of the year, and she happens to have a calf, the latter will survive unless the weather is exceptionally hard. Such calves will not mix much with other deer and will remain on the ground where the mother was killed.

Hinds display considerable intelligence at times, and if, when stalking, you happen to alarm one of these suspicious females, you are in for a bad time. During the last stalk I had, a hind, which could not really make up her mind as to the precise degree of danger we connoted, kept us lying for fully twenty minutes while she minced round, peering and barking; the stag meanwhile, out of sight below her, moved farther and farther away. She saved his life had he but known it.

A friend of mine had a very intimate acquaintance with a hind of this nature. She was very well known to the stalkers, both on account of her

marvellous cuteness and her light colour. She always kept about the same place, and finally got to be a great nuisance. One day my friend was watching his host stalk a certain stag who was lying on top of a knoll surrounded by hinds, the old yellow beast amongst them. The stalking party were making their slippery way along the course of a deep burn, well out of sight of the deer, when they had the misfortune to put up an ousel. Now, the ousel is not a large bird, and this particular one went off with very little noise, close to, but unnoticed by, most of the deer. Not so our old yellow friend, who really seemed to be gifted with almost human intelligence. She first looked hard at the bird, and then at the burn from which it had come. She, of course, could see nothing. At this stage of the proceedings most hinds would have walked mincingly to the edge of the burn, looked over, barked, and then made tracks for the nearest skyline, followed by the rest of the deer. However, she knew a trick worth two of that. Without alarming the other deer, she quietly sneaked off into the wood and, having made a detour, came up in the rear of the suspected spot. The stalking party, all unconscious of her presence, were of course in full view. Having first satisfied herself by a prolonged stare that the nasty crawling things in the burn were up to no good, she noiselessly went back the way she had come and joined the other deer. She uttered no sound and, so far as a good eye at the end of a spyglass could see, gave no sign, yet the fact remains that the whole herd of deer dashed off at a breakneck pace and did not stop until they reached a place of safety. Then, indeed, it was "that dommed auld beast" with a vengeance!

This faculty of silently warning their companions in the presence of danger, which deer, in common with many other wild animals, seem to possess, is one of the most marvellous gifts of Nature. It cannot be explained satisfactorily, and is more like a sixth sense than anything else.

The observer on this occasion had several encounters with this same hind. He suddenly came on her round a corner whilst stalking a stag, and remained motionless for about ten minutes. (The stalker, who was out of sight, timed him.) Having stared hard at him all this time, she quietly moved off over the skyline. However, her little ways were beginning to get known, so both gentleman and stalker remained motionless. It was well they did so, for next moment a nose and pair of eyes showed over a neighbouring knoll and then vanished. This was repeated not once, but three times. As a proof that this was not accident, but something strangely akin to reason, I may add that precisely the same thing happened on another occasion. Finally, the only thing to do when this particular hind spotted you was to go right round three or four miles and attempt to stalk from another quarter, or to give up all thoughts of sport and go home. Having "picked up" a stalking party, she would frequently retire to a distance of

about 600 yards and then follow them on, barking and raising Cain generally, giving warning to every deer within hearing distance that something was up. What happened to her I never heard. That several attempts were made on her life I know, but she managed to elude her would-be slayers every time. She may still be at her old games, or perhaps, as a shadowy hind in that forest which has no marches, rejoice in spoiling the stalks of hunters as shadowy as herself.



"THERE WERE GIANTS IN THOSE DAYS"

From a Drawing by Frank Wallace

John and Mary were sitting on the hillside, looking down at the valley below. The sun was setting, and the sky was a deep orange. John was pointing towards the valley, and Mary was looking at him with a smile. They were both dressed in simple, old-fashioned clothing. The valley below them was a mix of fields and forests, with a few small villages scattered throughout. In the distance, the hills rose up, their peaks shrouded in a light mist. The overall scene was peaceful and idyllic, capturing a moment of quiet reflection in a rural setting.

CHAPTER XXXI

MY FIRST STAG

"A boy is safe from all things that really harm him when he is . . . after a deer."

Puck of Pook's Hill.

UNDER these now stereotyped words many men, from Charles St. John downwards, have given to their readers the account of a red-letter day in their lives—a day which stands out brightly from the grey perspective of time into which other and more important events have vanished. A man can only kill his first stag once; and though in after years he may secure all sorts of grand heads, I think that none of them has quite the same value in his eyes as that shabby 6-pointer which no longer holds the place of honour in his smoking-room. It had always been my ambition to kill a stag; an ambition which a course of Scrope, St. John, and Millais had done nothing to lessen. Indeed, often when I was supposed to be working, the volume on "Red Deer," in *Fur and Feather*, would somehow find its way into my hands, and soon I would be roaming the hills and glens of Bonnie Scotland in place of reasoning out why $\sin A = \cosine B$, or some such uninteresting matter.

My first attempt at a stalk was frustrated by a too astute "beak," who discovered me after the deer in Windsor Park armed with a catapult. My bag was nil; indeed, I never fired a shot, although I got a good deal of fun out of it, in spite of the fact that that part of my body which is usually supposed to suffer when stalking had no exemption on this occasion. Yet I suffered on the following day, not during the stalk.

After this episode my stalking career rather languished until September 1897. On the 18th of that month (memorable also from the fact that on September 18th, 1699, Frederick of Prussia killed a stag with the greatest number of authenticated points on record—namely, 66) I killed my first stag. It came about in this way. My father was given two days' stalking, through the kindness of a friend, and let me have the second, whilst I also went out with him on the first to see how it was done. Looking back on it now, I laugh when I think of the procession which started for the hill. First the stalker MacRae, then my father, then a friend R., then myself, and lastly, the ghillie with a tracker. Five people! We none of us knew much

about stalking, and I often wonder what the stalker's feelings must have been on seeing us. True gentleman that he was, he never allowed a trace of surprise or disgust to appear on his weather-beaten features, though R.'s costume must have rather worried him. He had on a blue serge suit, a white linen collar, and leather gaiters buttoned over his trousers! I will not attempt a description of the day's adventures. We did get within shot of some deer, but R. was so anxious to see them that he stuck his head, minus a cap, over the top of the rock, in an endeavour to get a good view. As he was as bald as a coot, the strange white object flashing in the sun gave the poor beasts' nerves such a shock that, by the time the rifle was out of its cover, they were nearly over the march. To make a long story short, we returned home stagless and somewhat dispirited, so I went early to bed in readiness for the next day.

At last the eventful morning dawned. Needless to say, all my preparations had been made the night before, so at the rendezvous appointed by the stalker we met and started for the forest. On the way we passed a little cottage inhabited by Peter the shoemaker, Peter's wife, and Peter's wife's mother. She, by the way, was ninety-nine, and couldn't talk a word of English. Peter's wife was astir even at that early hour, and on seeing us requested a favour. She was rather bashful at first, but finally, on being pressed, asked us "to spare Ronald." Slightly bewildered, I asked who Ronald was. He turned out to be "an aaful stout cat, but he never took a rabbit whateffer." I had ideas of my own with regard to Ronald's feelings towards rabbits, as through the glass I had seen a mangy-looking bit of tabby fur doing a most scientific stalk after one a day or two previously. However, Peter's wife burst into a pæan of thanksgiving on receiving an assurance that Ronald's life should be spared, and we proceeded. As we went up through the birches I could hear Nature waking all around me. Far off an old cock called, "Go back! go back! go back!" breaking the early stillness with his sharp command, and then relapsing into muttered grumblings. Presently another answered his insistent calls, and soon they were rivalling one another on every side.

After a while the light grew stronger. Stones and knolls, before shadowy and vague, began to take definite outlines. The pale primrose of the eastern sky changed to a transparent pink which faded away into nothingness. The jagged outline of the hills beyond Loch Ness grew more distinct against the golden background, whilst the purple of a few tiny clouds floating serenely in the clear atmosphere changed to a quivering red. Then a crimson bar shot up across the sky from beyond the hills and held one by its dazzling contrast; again, another, and then the sun rose in all his glory, casting long shadows over the wakening hills and calling on everything great and small to rejoice. The mists began to disperse and to wreath themselves into



UNSUSPICIOUS



AFTER THE SHOT

fantastic shapes, clinging to the hilltops as if loath to leave their beauty even for the day. How every sensation of that morning's walk comes back to me! The swish of the bracken against my legs; the scent of the heather sparkling with the early dew; the murmur of the burn, or the sudden leap of a startled roe. A loud "whirr" over my head made me look up, to see half a dozen black-game disappearing through the birches. A clearing in the trees brought us to a black peaty pool, the torn ground and floating bubbles showing that it was not so very long since a stag had been "soiling." As we left the wood two hoodies flapped heavily up in front of us, a dead sheep with empty eye-sockets sufficiently explaining their presence. MacMillan told me he expected to find some deer feeding down into the wood, and sure enough we soon discovered a few scattered hinds and one or two stags. They were all small, but one had eight points, although I did not know it at the time. He looked enormous to me when I saw him through the glass, as he was only about 500 yards distant. I was then too inexperienced in stalking to ask any questions. Now I always find out from the stalker what his plans are before starting a stalk. He is usually only too pleased to tell you if he sees you are keen, and it is but poor fun plodding along behind a trained stalker with no idea of what is going to happen.

Having watched the deer feeding for a few minutes, MacMillan turned back into the wood, I meekly following. As we went I wondered what the end would really be, and sent a prayer to Diana to guide my aim. Should I really go to bed that night happy in having killed my first stag! It seemed too good to be true. A walk of a few minutes past gnarled birch trunks and fallen branches brought us into the open, and the stalker began to crawl forward, motioning me to do the same. I was clumsily endeavouring to imitate his agile movements, when my chin came into violent contact with the heel of his boot. Remembering former injunctions, I stopped dead and remained motionless. It was well I did so. On the other side of a dip up which we were crawling rose two little heathery knolls forming a kind of gap leading down to the wood. Between them a stag walked slowly into view. To my startled gaze he looked as big as an elephant, and the whole scene made an impression on me which I shall never forget. It was my first clear uninterrupted view at close quarters of a wild stag! One hind leg brought under him; a foreleg advanced; the wide, big ears pricked forward to catch the first hint of any coming danger; the damp, sensitive nose testing the early morning air; and the great soft eyes turned down on us as we lay. I thought he was bound to see us cowering in the heather within 50 yards of him; but after a prolonged stare he stepped forward a few paces, and then, turning, vanished behind the knoll. No sooner had he disappeared than MacMillan picked up the rifle and, drawing off the cover, crept rapidly forward to the top of the knoll. He shoved the rifle into my

trembling hands and almost dragged me up beside him. "Keep cool and tak' him canny," he said slowly into my ear; and following his glance, I saw my stag. He was making little fitful snatches at the young heather shoots and grass whilst walking slowly, broadside on, down to the wood. "What's the distance?" I quavered to MacMillan. "Eighty yards," came the reply, and I put the .450 to my shoulder. The sight wobbled round and finally rested on the red body. "Bring it up the foreleg and, when you see brown, fire," I kept repeating to myself. Through the mist in my eyes I saw the leg and the brown above it; then I pressed the trigger. The white cloud of smoke from the black powder hid everything for a second or two. When it cleared I saw the stag standing looking at us, and felt a sickening sense of disappointment. "Well done, you! Well done, you!" hissed MacMillan. "You've got him." All my pity for the stricken beast was lost in a sense of triumph as he began walking slowly past us with his head down, and I saw a thin red stream trickling from his side. "You'd best give him another shot, for fear he goes down to the wood," said the stalker, and this time it was in the right place, and he fell dead within 40 yards of us.

Hardly had the echo died away when an old hind came slinging on to the skyline followed by a herd of deer. They came down the hill towards us at that loose, easy trot peculiar to their kind, and we saw that there were a few stags, although the majority were hinds. We had just time to see through the glasses that there was a nice 9-pointer among them before they reached a hollow and were lost to view. MacMillan said they were making for a pass 200 yards distant from where we were, so, catching up the rifle, led the way. Before we reached the stone from which I hoped to get a shot the leading hind appeared on a ridge in front of us. The other deer rapidly closed up round her, but among them was no 9-pointer. I thought it was all over as she resumed her trot, followed by the rest, the only stags with them being a few knobbers. "He canna have left them," muttered MacMillan; and then, "Yon's him!" Topping the ridge was a stag. He looked a terribly long way off; but "Tak' a rest on my shoulder" presented a ray of hope, and accordingly I did so. At the shot he gave a wild leap forward and disappeared. "He got it," said Fanning, the ghillie. "Wull I loose the dog?" However, MacMillan told him not to, for fear of sending the stag into the wood, where we should lose him if the wound were only a slight one; so we led the collie up to the place where our beast had vanished. There was blood all right, and the dog strained hard, pulling the ghillie along in his excitement. Then he broke from the string, and Fanning threw his arm up and beckoned us forward. There lay my second stag, in a little hollow with a bullet right through his heart and his head hanging over a peat hag. "Yon was a verra lucky shot," said MacMillan, with a twinkle in his eye, whilst "bleeding" me, and though, at the time, I thought it one



SEPTEMBER—"WHICH SHALL I TAKE?"



THE TRAVELLER

of the very finest shots ever made in the history of stalking, I am since more inclined to attribute it to a fluke. Perhaps Diana heard my prayer! Anyhow, I had two dead stags to my credit, which was the chief thing. Since that day I have killed many deer, the majority of them with much better heads. Yet most often do I look at those two, as they hang together on the wall, and think of the morning when they lay side by side on the purple slopes of that far-off glen.

CHAPTER XXXII

AN OCTOBER MEMORY

"Behold, gentle reader, the inconstancy of variable fortune."

GEORGE TURBERVILLE.

IT cannot, unfortunately, be denied that as early youth leaves us there goes with it the first fine smack of romantic enthusiasm, which, try as we may in after years, can never wholly be recaptured. We detect its presence and catch fleeting glimpses of the elements which compose it ere it vanishes, elusive as a will-o'-the-wisp, into the mists which ever enshroud it; but we can never pin it down, nor encompass it. Our critical powers have become more highly developed, and though, as Stevenson remarks, "an appreciation of Shakespeare may balance a lost aptitude for playing at soldiers," the latter pursuit carried with it an elusive charm of make-believe for which in our maturer years we sigh in vain. We are on a different plane and more difficult to please. I do not suppose that I shall ever again experience the same delicious thrill with which I watched, after a desperate and exciting stalk among the gooseberry bushes, a thrush topple over the kitchen-garden wall, having succumbed to a slug from my air-gun; nor will a shabby 8-pointer ever again cause me the same glorious feeling of elation as did that one which was for ever marked off and set apart as my first stag. We live in a luxurious age, and it is, perhaps, a fact that anything involving hardships and discomforts brings us nearer to our original composition, and so to an appreciation of the simpler and less elaborate facts of existence. Deer-stalking, as a whole, is not in these days the arduous pursuit that it was when Charles St. John pursued the muckle hart with such fervour. Now one reaches the far beat in a motor-car, and bridle-paths facilitate the ascent of a steep hill. There is no particular reason that I can see why these facts should be so hardly commented on by certain critics. Such methods of transportation are inveighed against, and those who make use of them are covered with abuse. "Look," say these gentlemen, "how all our sportsmen are deteriorating." Then they playfully allude to tame deer, gorged pheasants, etc. Such an one was probably he who penned the famous line, "The crack of the rifle was early heard on the stubble!" I do not suppose that one of them, for instance, would rise at five o'clock in

the morning with the prospect of a hard day's stalking in front of him, merely for the pleasure of saying that he had walked to the far beat, when by getting up a couple of hours later he would reach the ground at the same time and start fresh.

I find it harder now when stalking to believe that I am traversing a wild and uninhabited mountain region in pursuit of some fabulous head. I do not, it is true, expend weeks of anxious thought on what my costume for the hill shall be; nor do I account for the movements of some wily stag by the explanation that had my coat been of different material to my nether garments his chances of detecting me would have been diminished by half! And yet it is the finest sport in Great Britain. You perhaps agree, when the stag of the season has departed over the march in undisturbed possession of his hinds and head, in lofty scorn of your marksmanship, with Sir John Millais who wrote to a friend after some such an occurrence, "You may depend upon it that roach-fishing from a punt is the thing, after all!"

That, at all events, was my feeling one October day some years ago. We had passed up one of the most beautiful glens in Scotland. The river lay far beneath us, hurrying between grey lichen-covered rocks over which the gnarled and storm-tossed firs stood guardian. Little babbling burns made unequalled music about us, and covered with their spray the clustered fern clumps which peered shyly from about their banks. It was a day on which I thanked Providence and a kind host that I was alive. And this even though the stalker was a confirmed pessimist. I had admiringly watched him perform a conjuring trick, by which in one swift movement he had transferred his glass from its case to his eye, and wondered.

"See anything?" I enquired cheerfully. "There's na a gude beest on the ground," was the discouraging rejoinder. We walked to a neighbouring hilltop. The conjuring trick was repeated. Then I felt a tug at my sleeve and found an eager ghillie pointing to a distant ridge. On the ridge was a stag. Such a stag, too. Those one loses always are! This is a fact and incontrovertible.

"There's a grand stag!" I exclaimed. The Pessimist took a long look.

"Aye!" said he, after a pause.

"Come," thought I, "it's not so bad, after all. I'm going to get the best head of the season." I was on "the unknown quantity," so called because one might find either a very good stag or nothing. The latter was clearly not the case, so in the joyfulness of my mood I jumped at the former alternative.

Then the Pessimist spoke. "I wouldna say it was a gude staag; but it's no a ba-ad staag."

"Brute!" thought I.

"Can we get at him there?" I enquired.

"He's just on the maich," said the Pessimist.

"If we move him he'll probably come into this ground," I suggested, hopefully.

"It's a verra ba-ad wind," said the oracle. "We never can do anything at aal in the cor-rie with this wind."

I gave it up after that. We had a long walk round the top of the corrie, frightening on the way a squeaking group of ptarmigan, who scuttled about among the rocks at our feet. The Pessimist was a very good stalker, and within an hour we were cautiously propelling ourselves down the hillside with our elbows and heels, just above the deer. In the peat hags below we exchanged our previous motive power for hands and knees. The Pessimist peered through a tuft of grass. "Quick!" he said. "Oh! mon." Fifty yards off a hind watched us. The stag's horns were just vanishing over the ridge. With extreme disfavour the Pessimist regarded the hind before us. Then he applied the glass to his eye. Presently he delivered himself with crushing scorn. In a tone of intense conviction he remarked, "Yon is a bee-astly hind!" It was.

All day long we wallowed in peat hags, tore ourselves with rocks, and got soaked to the skin. Once I thought we had him, routing in a peat hag and sending tufts of heather and black lumps flying in all directions. Always some unforeseen chance saved him. Once it was a grouse; once an eagle sent the herd dashing down the hillside. In the sun's rays a one-horned stag slept peacefully, placed there by the gods who watched over my would-be victim. The big stag drove him into the outermost Hades for daring to look at his hinds; but though he did not know it, his disturber had saved him. Then, as it grew dusk, we had to leave him roaring defiance with his hinds about him on the march. Two days later I found him again, lying in an inaccessible place for a stalk. In the next forest a stalker appeared over the skyline. A hind jumped to her feet, the surrounding deer imitated her example, and the next second they were off. As quickly as possible we followed. From the spot where they had been lying I saw a solitary animal wending his way, with backward glances, up the hillside. It was the big stag. Above a black scar on the green slopes of a little corrie with almost sheer sides he stopped and then lay down. Above him the rocks rose abruptly to a single point. The wind blew strong from behind him, and before his gaze lay the stretch of heather, intersected by a little burn, which we must cross. We slithered and wriggled across it, got over the burn in full view, and found ourselves safe for the time being. An hour later we had climbed the hill, dodged some hinds, and were in a fair way to approach him. Far in the distance I could see the peaks of the Reay country, with Wyvis raising his humped shoulders to the right. Moor and glen, strath and corrie, lay bathed in the sunshine, with here and there purple pools of



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shadow, or the sapphire gleam of some little lonely loch. On we went, and at last drew near the rocky point on which our hopes were centred. The last few yards were accomplished, and we peered over. There he lay, but how terribly small did he look! The wind was right, his back to us, and yet some strange sixth sense of which our duller faculties have but a glimmering must have told him of the hidden danger. He moved his head uneasily, then jumped to his feet. Never a second did he stand, but after one swift glance round moved down the hillside at a quick walk. Every second I hoped that he would stand and turn; but on he went, and there was but one chance. The march lay near, and for that, as though he knew that therein lay his safety, he made. Oh! those chances, desperate though they be, that we miss. How carefully would we aim; with what precision would our bullets go had we the shot again! We get them again; it is to be feared with much the same results! Over the march he went, standing for one tantalising moment on the skyline out of shot, and we, two saddened and despairing mortals, turned and made our way homewards, while the setting sun cast a parting benediction about the silent hills.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A BREAK IN THE MIST

"Come once again
To these familiar, silent, misty lands."

Atalanta in Calydon.

THAT a great part of the charm of sport lies in the uncertainty is a truism which needs no emphasising. I had a pleasing example some years ago, when in one day I killed more stags that I have ever killed before or since. At last the moment had come when I could go north; and how I had counted the days! The sun-kissed hills gleamed blue as we left Perth, and though the brown peaty burns were in spate, I had hopes that their waters would rise no higher, and that the golden weather which a fine October brings, and of which I had dreamed for so long, might become a reality. But, alas! it was not to be. High winds and equinoctial gales cleared the ground of deer and sent them to the high woods in the adjoining forest for shelter; when "craaling" became a necessity, it only stopped short at swimming; the mist effectually baulked one's every effort, and a chance roar was the sole guide to a doubtful success. Yet by dint of really hard work we managed to kill a fair number of stags, though good heads were rare. I have never seen so many one-horned beasts. I killed two with no trace of horn above one pedicle, and E. killed three, though in one case the horn had been broken off short. Incidentally, three of the stags I killed were blind in one eye, and a good many lacked one or both tushes. To this latter point my attention was drawn by one who has exceptional facilities for observing such matters. He told me that the absence of tushes during the previous two years had been most marked, and he was quite at a loss to account for it. That, however, is by the way.

October 11th dawned, like its predecessors, dull and misty, with occasional watery gleams. The sun strengthened as the day went on, and by 10.30 it became evident that we were in for a beautiful day. A welcome sight met my eye as Archie stopped at the spying rock. The face of the hill, which gales of mist and rain had swept cold and bare, was now alive with deer. The distance was too great to estimate their heads, so we set out on a long climb to reach a more commanding position. An hour or so later we reached

the top of the hill, and, though much of the slope was hidden, we were able to see one good stag. The wind was from the south-west, so all was plain sailing provided he remained in the same place. Making our way round the march, we moved some small stags, who made straight for our intended victim. He was, when they reached him, pursuing a hind with violent and apparently unwelcome attentions, and, beyond prolonged roars, paid no notice to the intruders. The end of the stalk came when we reached a point immediately above him. The ground was steep, and the deer were feeding and lying right under the shelter of the hill. By the time I had got into position for a shot I could almost have dropped a stone on one of the hinds.

They had been hidden from our view for a few minutes preceding the moment, and on looking over a convenient rock I could at first see no trace of the 9-pointer we were after, though there were several stags within shot. At last I made him out, being pursued by a much larger stag, also a 9-pointer, but with a totally different type of head. He had strong, thick horns, with double brows, and a small point on top of the right horn. Having disposed of his antagonist this stag trotted off, driving the hind, whose coy behaviour I had already noticed, before him. Having successfully embroiled two of the opposite sex, she, no doubt, was satisfied. (Later E. told me of another fight, and was much amused at the manner in which the hinds—whose fate the combat would settle—crowded round to obtain a good view!) The big stag and his enslaver being out of the way, the 9-pointer I had been stalking turned and looked back. I had already started moving up the hill with great care, for I feared the smaller stags and hinds below me would take the alarm, but on seeing this movement I remained still. The 9-pointer, at first slowly, but with increasing confidence, trotted towards me, and presently, having rejoined the hinds which his opponent had left him, gave me a good chance. At the shot the deer were not much alarmed, moved off a little way and stood. There was no shootable beast with them, but some distance off I noticed a stag with about twenty hinds moving up the hill. I knew from his movements that he belonged to the next forest and was intent on making his way back there. I calculated that we should just have time to cut him off if we crawled quickly up the hill, out of sight of the deer below. Archie dubiously acquiesced. However, I knew the stag had a good head, so, leaving Archie, I ran along the march and saw the hinds, already off our ground, two or three hundred yards distant. I could see no stag, so, taking advantage of some rocks, I crawled forward. Reaching these, I was rewarded by seeing a pair of horns vigorously demolishing a heather bush, and still on my side of the march. A few minutes later their owner moved forward, giving me an easy chance. He carried a head of eight points, but the horn was very thick and strong, with a length and span of over 30 inches. Gralloching him,

we returned to the first stag and performed the same rites. A solitary stag came and lay down within 130 yards of us while this operation was in progress, but he was a young beast.

Reaching the top of the hill we heard a roar, and a minute later saw the head of a hind coming into view. We lay down, and she passed within 30 yards without seeing us. Then followed an incident such as I had never experienced in nearly a quarter of a century's stalking. We were in full view, with absolutely no cover of any kind. A stag came trotting up to us, stopping occasionally to roar, and passed within 12 yards without detecting our presence. When he was out of sight we went on and presently spied a good stag with about twenty hinds at the foot of a burn with very steep sides, giving admirable cover, which had served me well on several previous occasions. Archie said he heard roars nearer at hand, but we could see nothing. After negotiating successfully the steep sides of the burn we found ourselves some 250 yards from the deer. There were several hinds lying about 30 yards off whom it was impossible to pass, and it was difficult to decide on a move. Whilst we waited we heard a loud roar, and presently a big stag trotted into view on our right. On examining him through the glass, I made out that he was the same beast which had driven off the first stag I had killed. He was a much better beast than the one I was then stalking, and I told Archie that we must try for him. He was not very keen, for he thought we might lose our chance of both. To make a long story short, we retraced our steps up the burn, and after a long, slow, wet but most interesting crawl, in full view of at least seventy deer, reached a point from which I could get a shot if the stag showed himself. He was out of sight under the hillside, some distance to our right, but I had hopes that he would pursue a hind and give me a chance. This he presently did, and stood facing me. Though my first shot failed to stop him, a second was more successful.

The deer were not much alarmed at the shot, and the stag (again a 9-pointer) at the foot of the burn eventually gathered all the scattered hinds together, whilst the young stags, knobbers, etc., moved off. The burn opened into a grassy flat, which merged into peat bogs. A wallow had been formed on the edge of these, and in this three or four of the hinds would roll and disport themselves at once. Several times they rose in a momentary spasm of feminine pettishness, and, their ears depressed, struck smartly at each other with their forelegs. We managed to reach the shelter of the burn again and retraced our steps to our former position. The deer having collected in one spot, we were enabled to advance down the burn to within about 200 yards of them. Beyond this the steep banks of our shelter merged in the surrounding heather, which gave no cover. However, the light was good, and I determined, if the stag stood still, that I would fire. For a long time

he was continually on the move, but at last he stopped on the edge of a ridge and gave me a good chance. I heard the bullet tell, and he disappeared. The hinds dashed off, and on going up we found he was quite dead.

I now had four nice stags, and resolved not to kill any more unless a really good head presented itself. After gralloching these two beasts we turned homewards. Though our stalks had occupied a long time, the actual distances were small. Little more than half a mile separated the 8-pointer and the last stag I had killed, which made the problem of getting them home much easier. It was getting dusk when we drew near the end of the beat, and we saw about thirty hinds a few hundred yards off. A stag was in front of them on the skyline, and the glass showed that he was a royal. As a matter of fact, I had missed him about a week before. We were in full view of the hinds, but they were apparently not much alarmed, owing to the bad light, and allowed us to pass them without moving very far. Once we had got down wind we turned, and reached a very rocky and steep slope, on which they were feeding. I had not seen the stag again, though I heard him roar, but on peering slowly round a projecting rock found myself looking straight into the face of a hind not 20 yards off. Her cocked ears and inquisitive air showed that she had noticed something, but had not yet made up her mind. Every moment I expected to hear her loud bark, which would show the game was up. All remained quiet, and though I could just make out the stag some 80 yards off beyond her, on taking another cautious peep, found it was impossible to fire. Thus we remained for some minutes, the light gradually growing worse, and I knew that if something did not shortly transpire there would be no possibility of my getting a shot. It was the hind which gave me my chance. As I looked round the corner of my screening rocks I heard a grunt, and saw the hind trotting away from me down the rocks, whilst, with head back, the stag urged her forward. He was not 20 yards from me. There was no time to lose, and I took a quick snap at his neck. He gave a tremendous jump, and I thought I had missed him. Running forward, I heard Archie shout behind me, "He's down!" and on going up found that he was a nice royal.

On reaching home I found that E. had had a very successful day, killing three stags, one a royal with very thick and massive tops. A week previously she had stalked this stag and hit him high in the right foreleg, which was broken at the shoulder joint. After a long chase she was compelled to leave him, as he crossed the march, and was last seen making for the shelter of the woods in the neighbouring forest. Having killed a stag on the same ground on the day of which I am writing, she was spying, and saw a stag limping badly come over the skyline and lie down. She drew the stalker's attention to it and, at the same time, to a pony and two ghillies, who were talking within a few hundred yards of the spot where the stag was last seen.

Together they went towards the spot with the rifle ready, and were some time before they noticed his horns. Not a movement betrayed that the stag was alive, the stalker, indeed, declaring that he was dead ! When they had approached to within five yards the stag suddenly jumped up and dashed off, when a shot in the neck brought him down. It is remarkable that a stag wounded in this manner should, after an interval of a whole week, be seen and killed within a few hundred yards of the spot where he had been originally stalked by the same stalker.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IN THE GLEN OF THE COTTON FLOWERS

"My thoughts are ever in the hills."—ANGUS MACKENZIE.

THE casual stalking guest's chances of killing a first-class stag are not very great. By first-class I mean a stag with horns whose length is over 34 inches, all the points well developed, these not less than ten, thick rough horn, and good span. Such heads are rare, and to sight a beast of this class on the hill is apt to bring on a mild attack of stag fever, even in the case of an experienced stalker.

I was sitting on a ridge high up in a Ross-shire deer forest on October 9th, my glass idly wandering down the glen which stretched away to the east below me. My chances of sport for the day were over, as we had found only one stag on the small outlying portion of the ground allotted to me, and he had hurriedly departed to even more remote places at the whine of my bullet over his back. I was to walk ten miles down the glen to "The Loop of the Deer," where S. had very kindly offered to put me up for the night ere returning home the following day—another sixteen miles.

"The Glen of the Cotton Flowers," as it is called in Gaelic, stretches almost from the west coast eastward to the broad strath which widens into glistening cornfields and lush pastures towards the Moray Firth. It is one of the finest bits of scenery in a land where grand scenery is the rule and not the exception. E. and I had walked the whole of its length in a long day's march the week before, and as I lay, idly spying, it was with the thought that the last of my stalking for the year lay behind me. Parties of deer were scattered over the whole of the wide grassy face above the loch side. A river made silver loops and turns in the dark depths of the valley. Beyond, on the other side, "The Glen of the Fairies" and the slopes of Choilich—two of the finest corries in the whole of Ross-shire—presented a panorama of sun-kissed tops, rocky precipices, and mist-wreathed hollows which combined to inspire the belief in a hill-lover that he had at last reached the heaven of his dreams. The yawning roars of the stags echoed faint and near. Good stags there were, but nothing exceptional. A string of hinds emerged from the shadows and trooped sedately into the sunshine, stopping, looking backwards, and slowly moving forward again.

As my glass followed them the upper edge of the circle caught a cluster of hinds lying on a bare patch amid the grasses. The circle crept up until I had counted over eighty. But there was no stag. This was against all laws of nature. I worked the glass round. Various small stags in attitudes varying from sleepy indifference to active boredom or sulky defiance, were dotted about the surrounding country within 300 yards of the herd. One more venturesome than the rest casually advanced until he was within easy rifle shot, emitting now and again an emulous challenge. From the dip behind the herd of hinds appeared the tops of horns. Then in a furious rush a great stag launched himself on the intruder, who incontinently turned and fled. The master, with a final bellow, turned and made his way to the centre of his admiring harem and lay down.

"Aye! Yon's a gude staag!" said Sandy, as he lay beside me.

In truth he was. I could see a big fork on his right horn, and a cluster of points on the left. Thick and massive they looked, with long curving bays; but his lower points I could not define. "Nine, at least, Sandy," I remarked.

"Mph! Nine; he may be more," he assented cautiously. I have sometimes thought since that Sandy was more cautious than I suspected at the time!

There he lay, well over the march with the wind in the wrong airt, and I knew that my chances of getting him were nil. That he was the best stag I had seen in the flesh for eight years I was certain. We lay there watching him all that morning and late into the afternoon. Then it was time for me to go, and with a "*Beannachd libh*" to Sandy, and some parting admonitions on his part as to poaching, I turned down the hill. Not until a bend in the path hid him from my sight did I refrain from pulling out my glass each few hundred yards, to gain from every point of view another look at the master of the herd. He never moved, but lay quietly there in the midst of his hinds, and I had to content myself with doing an imaginary stalk, conning the broken dip, the knoll, and the final rise which would have covered my approach had the fates been kinder.

It was four days later. On the 10th, returning homeward, I had met by chance the lessee of the forest. He, it appeared, was going south, and his kindly expressed invitation to finish off the last three days of the stalking season left me in a condition of dazed and happy bewilderment. Three stags with Archie on the 12th, including a nice 11-pointer, confirmed my belief that Fortune was in one of her fickle moods of capricious benevolence. It was not of the 11-pointer that I dreamed! The 9-pointer, which I had so reluctantly left sunning itself above the loch, filled every moment of my thoughts.

My first question to Finlay as I reached once more "*The Loop of the Deer*" was of him. Finlay had been sceptical of my eulogies. He knew the stag—a good enough beast, but a young one. He had word that a grand

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stag with a lot of points had been stalked and lost by Sandy since my visit. He might be there on the march yet. We would start early and possibly might find him. The wind was not so bad. With such soothing words did he allay my excitement. Another rifle had, it appeared, been out from a neighbouring forest, but had got nothing special. Hope still reigned supreme.

It was after ten o'clock on the morning of the 14th that we lay on the south side of the glen, carefully spying the slopes above the loch side. Deer there were in plenty. I could see the rocks below which he had lain. A herd of deer lay within a few hundred yards of the spot, but they were none of his. We counted eight separate lots of hinds scattered about with two stags which "would be the better o' a shot," but the master stag was not to be seen.

"I doot he'll be back beyond Riabhachan," said Finlay, and in depressed mood I agreed. "We'll just go up the march and see will we get a sight o' anything gude. If no, we'll just try yon beast," he continued. We crossed the river, ascended easily by a broken track, and found some deer at the foot of the ridge from which I had first spied my incubus. They were on a ridge, beyond which might lurk a stag, though no roars assured us of his presence. The mist swept in low wisps over the tops, and for some time we debated as to whether we should advance.

At length Finlay decided to reach a point a few hundred yards ahead which would give us a view of the hags on the edge of which lay the hinds. Accordingly we started. But a few yards separated us from our goal when out of the mist on the horizon above us came a string of hinds. They were walking quickly and purposefully. A hasty dive, with a sudden snatch for the rifle, brought us to cover. As we cowered there I caught a glimpse of tops which sent my heart into my mouth.

"Yon's more like it!" I caught in an aside from Finlay. There was no time to take out a glass. The hinds, still walking quickly across our front, were nearly out of sight in the mist. "Come on!" hissed Finlay, and dashed for a knoll 60 yards beyond. I heard a grunt up the hill, and two hinds trotted out of the mist to join their companions. Over the top of the knoll I saw a stag walking after them, and out of the tail of my eye an old hind watching me from below. There had been no stalk, nor was there time for hesitation. Once down on the slope with all those deer about my chances would be very much less. He was 120 yards off, walking fast but broadside, his head held low. I aimed for the front of his shoulder, but the bullet, as he stopped, struck at the base of the ear slanting away from me, and he fell as though struck by lightning. He was *the* stag, but instead of nine points he had thirteen, with a beautiful top on the left horn and a short point on the big right fork. His length was just under 33 inches, and in a good season he might have been a great head. Anyhow, it will be a very long time before I get a chance at his equal.

CHAPTER XXXV

A PERFECT DAY

"Come back to the glen, to the glen, to the glen,
And there shall the welcome be waiting for you.
The deer and the heathcock, the curd from the pen,
The blaeberry fresh from the dew."—PIPE TUNE.

IT is not often that one can call to mind any one date and say, "That was a perfect day!" One day in 1921 was perfect to me, or as perfect as any human day can be. It was the second day of October, when, if ever, perfect days come in Scotland.

Uncertainty is usually very trying; the only form of uncertainty which is not, is the uncertainty of sport, for its whole essence lies in doubt. How tame would any sport be if we knew its ultimate outcome; and, in particular, deer-stalking? To go to the hill knowing without any question that a stag—and, to an even greater extent, any one stag—would die, would rob the day of its glamour; in *X*, the uncertain quantity, lies its charm.

There is, in many large forests, a kind of debatable beat, ground on which you may kill the stag of your dreams or some beast that is well out of the way. These, as experience in stalking increases, are the two kinds of deer the stalker likes to kill. The first varies in degree, for what may be a good stag in one forest is nothing accounted of elsewhere. Switches, hummels, malforms, *et hoc genus omne*, are the same wherever you go. They may be anywhere. The first, the really good stags, are often near the march, and in a forest such as that where I was a guest may be very good. So that when I arrived late one evening and my host said, "Will you go to the 'gloomy corries' to-morrow?" I was very happy. Four marches meet there. Three terminate the bounds of some of the best deer ground in Scotland; whilst the fourth is a small forest, really the offshoot of a greater.

On a previous visit I had stalked this beat, a day of mist and rain and howling winds. We had had a blank day and were turning despondently homewards when a fusillade of shots attracted our attention to the lower ground across a swollen burn. From the crest of the ridge it lay spread before us like a map. Wild, bleak peat hags, swelling to green slopes and gullies, in one of which lay the falls which made the beat famous throughout

Scotland. Kenneth's quick eye it was which saw the scattered deer converging on the burn—strings of hinds galloping across the flats, followed by single stags, and then the younger beasts in little bands. Far beyond them, creeping about the knolls, three black specks came in pursuit. Their quest was hopeless, for the deer had already crossed the march, and Kenneth's glass selected a prospective victim. A quick slither into the hollow of a burn, a run down the hill, and we were almost on the deer. A right and left at two good stags was our reward, its value increased far (such is the depravity of human nature!) by the sight of a disappointed trio, their disgust apparent in their despondent and forlorn gait, wearily dragging up the opposite hill.

Of these events Kenneth and I talked. To reach our ground a stiff climb took us out of the main valley. Far beneath us lay the calm waters of the loch, past which we had motored an hour before, shaggy woods encompassing the road which wound along its shores. The tops were shrouded in mist. The air was very still, and as we advanced the stalker shook his head ominously when I suggested spying. In truth the outlook was not promising. The peat hags and lower slopes, covered with coarse grass and heather, were clear, but on these we were unlikely to see deer, for the day was mild and the higher ground still held them. Past little lochs we went, pleasant with sandy coves and green rushes; grey rocks, tumbled about the hillside, showed bare and gaunt; burns clattered and rippled near at hand; but of the tops we had no sign. Grey vapour swirled sluggishly about them or hung stagnant in the hollows. At length we reached a place beyond which it was inadvisable to go without fear of disturbing the ground. The lower shoulders of the hill which guarded Corrie Lochan were clear, and on them we could hear roars. The glass disclosed a small stag and a few hinds scattered among the rocks; whilst nearer at hand a bigger stag, with a harem of about thirty hinds, fed above a deep burn which came from the mist-covered corrie before us. Kenneth decided to wait, and I had no better advice to proffer. So we lay there, and even though the prospects of sport were poor, I thanked whatever gods there be for the fact that I lay there on the heather among the hills. It was very still. A faint roar at intervals alone broke the silence, or the staccato call of some old cock grouse. For half an hour or more so we stayed, and then, as my eye wandered up the slopes to the blanket of mist, it seemed that in one place it had slightly thinned. At first it was an almost impalpable lightening. There was no clearing. The tops were still hidden, but there was an indefinable hint of better things. My spirits rose. Of all the emotions of which the human heart is capable, surely the most uplifting is that caused by the sight of mists rising from a hillside before the warm rays of the conquering sun. The doubts and worries, the ill-humours and cares, which hem in our daily lives seem, with the mists, to melt and leave us free. It is like a reawakening, a new

birth. We rejoice in a world where all is beautiful and clean, a world in which for a few brief moments we ourselves seem not unworthy to dwell.

So it was now. The light grew stronger; the sullen, lowering mists swirled angrily, compelled by a force which they resented. From the corrie itself and the lower slopes they rose in heavy masses, shredded and swirled about the tops, clung for a resting-place here; there, draped themselves about a rocky crag in vain. A patch of blue sky shone above them like a beacon of hope, widened, and grew bigger. A ray of sunshine pierced the opening, grew stronger, and rested on a jewelled hillside. Another came, and then another, until before us lay the landscape bathed in sunshine—blue, red, gold, and green—a panorama of such loveliness that my eyes, resting on its beauty, grew dim.

Without more ado Kenneth set out up the long slope of the hill which lay before us. The corrie lay on our right, sheltered from our gaze by a shoulder of the hill. It was a long climb to the top, but once there the crest of the ridge took us easily to the spot from which, without disturbing anything it contained, we could spy the entire corrie. On our left the ground sloped steeply to the head of the "Fairy Glen," a wild cleft which wound its way for five or six miles into the heart of the hills. We were right on the march and could see many good stags with their hinds scattered about the grassy slopes. In a corner among some huge grey rocks which, in a long ridge, ran down into Corrie Lochan we settled ourselves. Far below us in the centre of the amphitheatre was a little hill loch from which the corrie took its name. Almost circular in shape, this had only one outlet, where the burn foamed and roared in a miniature waterfall towards the flats we had already spied. Very steep rocky ridges, broken by grassy slopes, converged on the hollow of the corrie and formed an unbroken rocky wall round its three remaining sides.

Four hundred yards from us, near the foot of the slope, some twenty stags were lying. Almost in the centre of the corrie among the peat hags which hemmed in the loch—a sapphire in their midst—lay a single stag and three hinds. A few hinds fed on the slopes farthest from us.

Carefully and at length we weighed each head among the stags below us. The best was a nice 11-pointer, but that he was a young stag was evident from his presence there. It was the lonely stag beyond which drew my glass again and yet again. Not all at once could I estimate his worth. Broken hollows in the peat, a patch of heather, a grey rock, interfered with a clear view of his mighty horns. For mighty they were. My first glance had showed me that. I said nothing at first to Kenneth, dallying with a pleasure long drawn. Thick and strong were those main beams, with double brows, rough and curved. Big forking tops on either horn gave him ten points, and, as for a second one showed against a patch of green, eleven.



THE BREATHLESS MOMENT

"Yon's a graand stag!" said a voice at my elbow. It was Rory, the ghillie, and the best I have ever met, his eyes gleaming.

"I can make out eleven," I answered.

"I'm thinking he has the twelve." This from Kenneth. A royal!

"Well, we'll no get at him there. It's sheer impossible."

It was. The stags below would see us at once if we attempted to crawl down the hill. We were in full view, and Kenneth's glass swung back to the young 11-pointer.

He turned to me. "We'll no be letting him pass," he announced.

"But he's a young stag," I objected.

"Och! He's no so young."

It is very difficult for a guest to withstand the persuasions of a professional stalker. Over twenty years' experience had at least taught me something, and on this point I was firm.

"We'll try for that stag by the loch, Kenneth," I said, "or nothing. I don't in the least mind if I don't get a shot, but we'll try."

Kenneth assented, rather dubiously. "Well," he said, after pondering for a minute, "there's just once chance only. For Rory to go round the top and move him."

I assented, and, duly enjoined, Rory crawled back up the hill and disappeared. The big stag got up and roared at intervals. His hinds lay and basked in the sun. The young stags below us fed, or lay quietly among the rocks.

Twenty minutes later a single stag came clattering out of the shadows at the far end of the corrie and, followed by a second, made for the open hill. The big stag, roaring, moved slowly in towards the foot of the hill below us. The young stags rose, staring intently, turned and walked up the hillside. Unexpected hinds suddenly made their appearance in the corrie, and on the wall-like skyline, half a mile away, suddenly came into view a small black mannikin, Rory. "Quick!" Kenneth hustled me up the hill, behind a high ridge of rock, and not a moment too soon.

As I crouched, flattened behind a boulder, ten yards off I saw the tips of horns moving jerkily upward. Then one pair stopped and faced in our direction, raised themselves until I saw the tray points, but no more, turned and jerked onwards. The rattle of hooves, clinking against the stones, came clearly to me. Then it passed, and I knew that from the band of young stags we were safe. We crept to the edge of the slope. Directly below us the big stag, his harem swollen by the coalescence of stray units to the number of thirty, roared defiance on a knoll. His wives were restless, striving to leave the corrie whilst he prevented them.

Kenneth took a prolonged stare, with craning neck, then, motioning to me, started to slither down the hill. Three hundred yards from our objective

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the way was blocked by hinds, which, *horribile dictu*, lay in our direct route. Slowly, very slowly and cautiously, we slithered on, stopping when they moved, crawling when their heads were turned, and so, at length, reached comparative safety. Leaving me, Kenneth ventured forth alone. Move I dared not, with those horns in my mind, though it needed self-control to remain quiescent whilst he was away.

At last he returned, shaking his head. They were in an impossible position—unsettled—and our only chance was to work back up the hill again and try another route. Slowly we toiled upwards once more, and so again reached the crest. A long slanting ridge of grey rock gave excellent cover, and under its shelter half an hour later we reached a huge buttress which projected from green, grassy slopes. A cautious peep and I saw the stag. He stood out of shot, on the far side of his hinds, the nearest of which fed within 150 yards of us. Slowly we withdrew, crept back, and flat on our backs propelled ourselves slowly forward. We gained a hollow, raised our bodies, and crept to a low knoll which overhung a hollow 200 yards across. The light was failing, and at first I could see no stag. Then his horns showed clear, nearly 200 yards away. The hinds were scattered up the hillside, nearly all feeding, whilst their lord and master lay.

"We canna' get closer," murmured Kenneth, and I took the rifle. Very gently I slid it forward on the knoll and raised it to my shoulder. My gaze was concentrated on the stag, but out of the tail of my eye I saw three hinds trot suddenly forward not 30 yards from me. I knew, subconsciously, that the supreme moment had come, and as the stag rose I was ready.

He stood for a second on the edge of a rock, below him a deep peat hag. His matted neck was stretched, and the beginning of a roar rang out over the corrie. It was suddenly cut short, and as a minute or two later I stood over the beautiful red body and fingered his horns, I knew that I had, at any rate, one perfect day to record in the, alas! lengthening pages of my game book.

CHAPTER XXXVI

BY THE BURN OF THE SILVER BIRCH

"We are the masters of the days that were.
We have lived."—W. S. HENLEY.

EVERY stalker, I suppose, cherishes dreams of the wonderful heads which the Goddess of Fortune may one day throw in his path—dreams which, for the most part, continue to stimulate his imagination without increasing his taxidermist's profits. Occasionally they materialise, and then stand out as red-letter days in the memory, the more conspicuous from their rarity. It is not often given to a guest to shoot a stag approaching the first-class in a Highland forest, and few would blame a host for reserving such a trophy for his own rifle. It is but rarely, too, that such a head is unknown to the stalkers on the beat. Yet now and again such a head, particularly on ground which carries much wood, does turn up. I little thought that one would ever come my way. Yet it did. This is its history.

My host and I had parted at the edge of the wood which ran for the first six miles of the glen above the swirling, peaty waters of the river.

"Mind you get a royal!" was his parting admonition. Many a time had I heard the same cheery injunction. Here least of all did I expect its fulfilment, for the forest was a small one where big stags were few and far between.

Donald was with me, young and "aafu' keen." Our preliminary spy yielding no result, we made for a low hill which rose above the wood commanding a view of our ground toward the eastern march. It was a mellow October day with a slight chill in the air, for the tops were snowbound. Down in the valley and on the lower slopes the brown friendliness of the moors was upturned to a sky of deep blue. At intervals in the green of the fir woods a silver birch caught the eye, its feathery top looking as though powdered with gold dust, whilst faint and far came the call of an old cock from the fringe of the moor.

Then as we walked the sky became overcast, heavy clouds banked up in the north, and as we crested the hill a smart snowstorm drove us to the shelter of a rock. Presently the flakes lessened, ceased, and the sun shone again on a world of white.

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Out came our glasses, and simultaneously five stags galloped up from the dip below us. They paused in horrified amazement at our presence, then disappeared over the opposite crest.

"Puir heids!" said Donald. "He'll have moved them beyond the burn." "He" was my host, and from the next ridge we could see the beasts he had moved pursuing their way towards the wood whose scattered outposts crept to meet us up the hill.

Beyond these on the slope of a ridge a herd of deer was lying. There were several stags with it, and one, which seemed to be the best, lay nearest us at the foot of the hill.

Accordingly, half an hour later, found us hot and peat-stained, cowering behind a stone within 50 yards of this latter animal. He was sound asleep and quite unconscious of our presence. I made out nine points, but he was a young promising stag which in a few years might develop into a really shootable animal. Then the uneasy movements of a hind broke in upon his dreams and up went his head. For a second or two he lay gazing intently towards us, then scrambled hastily to his feet. I showed a little more cap over the friendly rock and with a stamp and a snort he was off with that beautiful, effortless, free action which is the heritage of the red deer. Several times he stopped, for they had not winded us and had seen nothing clearly. Deer seldom bolt straight away without halting irresolutely, unless they have got a whiff of tainted air. Even when the last hind had vanished we lay still, though Donald was all for going on. I checked him, and presently over the ridge came a damp, twitching nose and the wide searching eyes of a hind. She looked long at the grey rock; but nothing moved, and once again she vanished. Then we followed and watched them join the five stags of the morning, where they all lay sunning themselves on the slopes above the wood.

We had not much ground left to cover, and I asked Donald where the march was.

"Just below yon top," he answered, "by the smaal burn wi' the silver birches," and turning—for there were no deer in sight—began to climb the hill. The light rendered spying a matter of great difficulty. Not a day when the deer were thrown into sharp relief, but merged in the hillside, blending with the heather and grasses until well nigh indistinguishable. From the ridge it took some minutes to make out a number of hinds moving slowly about the peat hags at the head of the burn. Then it was that I found my glass focussed on a white object which I made out to be the head of a knobber. Many deer are light in colour, but this beast was as white as the paper on which I write. There have been white park deer in the neighbourhood, and doubtless the knobber was the result of some unofficial alliance in the past. We must have caught glimpses of them for half an



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hour or so as we slowly made our way along the slope of the wood. Gradually the white knobber and a couple of hinds outstripped the main body and, as we drew near the march, were feeding by themselves.

Our only chance now lay in some good stag emerging from the wood. As I put my glass on the knobber for the twentieth time I saw him gazing with cocked ears at something outside its field. Slowly I swung in the direction of his gaze, and a black stag, accompanied by a solitary hind, came into view.

"That's a good stag, Donald," I said. "The best we've seen yet. A nine-pointer."

Donald took a long look. "He's no baad," he pronounced, with that damping pessimism so often employed by stalkers to check the exuberance of their "gentlemen." "The rolling'll be making him look better than he is."

"Brute!" I thought, though I knew he was right.

His glass wavered on. Mine followed. That was a very big bit of heather to appear so conspicuous. My eye began to water. Down came the glass. Then another look. Was that the breeze stirring the heather root, or my imagination?

No remark from Donald. It must be a bit of heather. I swung the glass back. The knobber, stepping delicately like Agag, was advancing towards the 9-pointer. I wanted to see their meeting, but even more wanted to see what that bit of heather was doing.

The heather had gone and in its place stood a stag.

"What staag is yon to the richt of the nine-pointer?" said Donald.

A little wayward gleam of sunshine came stealing shyly over the hill towards him. It turned the knobber to burnished silver. It touched the 9-pointer, and I could see the black peat sticking in lumps to his sides. It stole on and bathed my stag in glory. One, two, three, I counted on his left top, and a big fork on the right. Try as I would I could not see his brows, nor could I make up my mind about that right top. Below the fork I thought I could detect a shadow, though it was scarcely a shadow—just the barest hint at something far back from the main beam.

It was getting late and the shadows had already begun to gather. The little group of deer on the far side of a gully, shallow and wide where they stood, but deep and narrow where it formed the march on entering the wood, seemed undecided what to do. Until they made a move we could only remain hidden, but at length the 9-pointer walked briskly forward, followed by the other deer, towards the wood.

Hastily shutting our glasses, we held a hurried council of war, then scrambled down through the long tangled roots of heather, knee-deep, to the edge of the firs. Out of sight, we ran as quickly as we were able to a knoll from which we hoped to see the deer. The 9-pointer and his faithful hind

stood some 400 yards off. Behind her neck the tops of the big stag showed.

At the end of ten minutes their leader had made up his mind that no danger lurked in the wood, so walked over the ridge and out of sight. Only waiting until the knobber, who brought up the rearguard, had vanished, we slipped from our hiding-place and tore across the intervening hollow. The edge of the wood was close at hand, for not 150 yards from where we lay a rugged old fir raised its leafless branches. Rubbing his shoulder gently up and down, completely hidden save for his haunch, was the big stag.

"He'll give you a chance directly," said Donald. I could see the left horn, though the right was still hidden. Brow, bay, tray, and three on top, all long and well formed. His neck worked gently up and down, and I knew his eyes were half shut. Then the gentle rubbing ceased, and round the edge of the trunk came his other horn.

I heard Donald grunt, and a long "Aah!" The right horn was an exact duplicate of the left. Then the whole head emerged, and, though its shape was spoiled by the narrow span, I knew I had before me a royal whose equal I had never seen alive. And I could do nothing!

One step to the left, half a turn, and there was a good chance of his being mine. But that one step for which I prayed was never taken. He suddenly left the tree, walked quickly and decisively stern on towards the wood, and vanished.

"Take the nine-pointer," whispered the tempter. "A grand chance."

"I'm hanged if I do!" I retorted. "I'll have that stag or none. Quick! Round into the wood."

"Mon! they'll get the wind," gasped the startled Donald.

"We must risk that," I rejoined. "Quick—this way!"

Flat as our ancient enemy, we slithered back out of sight, doubled round, and peered cautiously through a tuft of heather. The 9-pointer stood as he had before, within 50 yards of us. The white knobber faced us a bare 30. Unpleasantly cool, the breeze fanned my left cheek, and no sign could I see of the royal.

"Back!" I hissed over my shoulder.

Round we went, still behind a knoll, rolled and scrambled to the top of the gully, which, as it entered the wood, widened again into an open flat through the centre of which trickled the burn below the birches. A huge dead fir tree sprawled broken white arms in the heather on the far side; but it was not at these I looked, but at the royal whose splendid tops gleamed in the last rays of the sun. He was stern on. I hope it was not unsportsmanlike. Three steps and he would have been lost. His head came slowly round. Regardless of everything, I fired and became dimly aware of a heavy hand patting my back and Donald's ecstatic eulogies in my ear.

CHAPTER XXXVII

STALKERS OLD AND NEW

"My beauteous corri! my misty corri!
What light feet trod thee in joy and pride!
What strong hands gathered thy precious treasures!
What great hearts leapt on thy craggy side!"

DONNACHADH BAN.

IN over a quarter of a century of deer-stalking one meets many and varied types of stalkers. There is the careful stalker, the rash stalker, the quick, and the slow; he who will take risks, and the man who loses his chances through over-caution. But there is scarcely one with whom I would not again welcome a day on the hill. Suspicious and reserved at first, once admitted to his intimacy, no one will remember you with feelings of greater affection, nor give you a warmer or more genuine welcome on your return. Many a friendship I recall with the greater pleasure for knowing that its genesis took place upon some lonely hillside. With quaint turns of speech and unexpected and illuminating remarks he makes the flying hours fly the more swiftly, and will discuss books of which you may never have heard with shrewdness and discrimination.

MacMillan was a somewhat dour Highlander, a pillar of the kirk, whom the death of my first stag moved to but a perfunctory enthusiasm. Macrae, who, though stalking the adjoining beat, had accompanied us as ghillie out of affection, I like to think, for my unworthy self—a descent which only those who know the Highland stalker can appreciate—was of a different stamp. I have seen better stalkers, but his unbounded joy as that shabby little 8-pointer fell blinded my eyes to those failings which I was then too inexperienced to appreciate. It was a year ago that I followed him to his last resting-place. Peace to his ashes! We are all, as we grow older, apt to view the past through rose-coloured glasses. No joys ever quite equal those early stalks when the world was young and every tree was green, before Peter Pan had had time to grow up and Queen Flavia ruled in Zenda! If the hills were not quite so steep, the stags, if not bigger, were certainly more imposing!

The stalkers, too, or so it seems to me, were of a different stamp to their successors. I love the old photographs where every stalker seemed to wear

a big black beard and a deer-stalker cap! They may not have been better stalkers. The modern alert young stalker can circumvent a stag well enough, but I miss the kindly thoughtfulness, the air of repressed enthusiasm which I associate with my early days, and, when I am fortunate enough to be a guest, welcome the chance which sends me out with the older man. Some, though not all, by any means, of the younger ones set about the business with a somewhat mechanical taciturnity. It is less of a sport and more a part of a daily routine to be got through as expeditiously as possible. In years gone by to see a stalker or ghillie with a cigarette depending from his lips was unknown. Now this disgusting habit is common, and the cigarette may hang there while its owner converses. The homely and friendly pipe reposes in the pocket of its elderly owner until the stag is dead and you are two friends fraternising over a joint success.

I have had the luck to stalk with some young men with whom it is a pleasure to be out, charming companions, keen, and in their knowledge of deer no whit inferior to their elders. The latter can be trying at times. In one forest where I was a guest several years ago, the head stalker was a somewhat wobbly octogenarian whose excursions on the hill were limited to "a jorly day in the sa-anctuary." His colleague—usually referred to as "the lad"—was a likely young fellow of sixty-eight! In common with many of his contemporaries he was a first-rate walker and a good stalker.

Almost the worst fault a stalker can commit is to walk quickly and suddenly into view of ground which he has not yet spied. I have known more than one good stag lost thus; nearly always the result of over-keenness. The man who is exaggeratedly cautious is equally trying. I have, after making a detour of four or five miles, involving a climb of 2000 feet, been galloped—literally—down a face of half this height to the deer which were hidden by a shelving ledge. When we peered over, having covered the last 100 yards or so in rather more leisurely style, we found them trotting in undisguised astonishment up the face which we had so gaily descended, well out of shot. A cautious stalker, in this case, would probably have got a shot. On the other hand, the man who is always poking about, tentatively essaying various routes, will never make a good stalker. Sooner or later he will find his retreat blocked by the unexpected appearance of an inquisitive hind, and the deer will take the alarm. A combination of dash—for dash is often necessary—and caution, based on experience, are the qualities which ensure success.

I have often thought—whatever the amateur's feelings—how intensely exasperating a day's stalking may be for the professional. The amateur of experience, however good a stalker himself, will give him no trouble. It is the inexperienced ignoramus who thinks he knows all about it who will render his day miserable. This is the type who loudly exclaims in the

smoking-room that he sees no enjoyment in being led at the heels of a professional, and who, probably, would have not the faintest idea how to get in at a stag were he given the chance. He harries the stalker with questions, demands on the spot the why and the wherefore of each move, criticises and complains if the stalk fails, often through his own fault, and patronises the stalker if it succeeds. One man I know, whom to hear you would imagine an Admirable Crichton at every form of sport, took a forest. Half-way through the season, not having secured the heads he had anticipated, he deliberately, the stalker protesting, invaded the sanctuary. He killed a stag and was restrained from following up the remainder. These, to the number of sixty good stags, moved out in a body, crossed a valley, ascended the hill opposite, and passed into a neighbouring forest whence they did not return. This particular sportsman, by sheer nagging incompetence, reduced the stalker by the end of the season to such a condition of nervous uncertainty, that he was fit for nothing, and talked of resigning his job. He told me in all seriousness that he would sooner go out with an indifferent type of amateur for a whole season and a £1 tip at the end of it, than £50 from such a sportsman as his late employer.

Another stalker, a friend of many years, was sent out in charge of a short-sighted, nervous individual, who had never seen a stag in his life. This our friend discovered in due course. He took him up to a stag which his companion was unable to see. Thoroughly exasperated, after a ten minutes' colloquy he deposited the amateur behind a boulder with instructions not to stir. He then proceeded to stalk the stag on his own, hit it in the haunch—he is a vile shot save when under the influence of mountain dew!—and followed it into a wood, where he eventually killed it. It is, perhaps, kinder to draw a veil over the scene which followed his return!

On another occasion this stalker was the hero of an episode which involved the pursuit of a stag—possibly wounded—into neighbouring territory. Unfortunately for him his proceedings were being watched by a sulphurous stalker who was responsible for the ground on which he was performing his antics. His child-like *naïveté* alone saved him on this occasion.

A curious reluctance which many stalkers have for loosening the rifle in its cover when a quick shot may be necessary has often saved a stag. Once a stag which has been "bounced" within shot has taken alarm, the time occupied in fumbling and tugging at a recalcitrant strap—which always sticks at the critical moment—usually gives him the opportunity to make off.

Some stalkers have a wonderful sense of direction. They can tell approximately where a stag is if they hear, for instance, his roars coming out of a wall of mist. My old friend Archie Campbell has this gift in a marked degree, but it is very difficult for a novice to locate such a sound with any exactitude.

The quality of a stag is difficult to tell by his roar, though Lord Belper

tells me he was much struck by the accuracy with which his guide in New Zealand could ascertain whether the stag was a good one or not by this sound.

Often the older stalkers have quaint terms of speech. As a pack of ptarmigan swept over the shoulder of a corrie whose slopes I was climbing, the stalker turned to me and remarked, "An eagle will be parading the ground yonder!"

Said a lady to a stalker as they were nearing the spying point, "Look, Donald, surely that's a beast!"

The stalker solemnly regarded the object indicated and observed, "It is a stane, your leddyship."

She, however, continued to assert that she was sure it was a stag, going so far as to remark that she had seen it move.

"It is a stane," responded the stalker.

"Wait, Donald; I'm sure I saw it move. I'll have a look through the glass," which she proceeded to do. "Yes, you're quite right, Donald; it is a stone," she said, being at last convinced.

"Ay!" said her companion dryly, "I kened fine it was a stane," finishing with the crushing remark, "It is the same stane you was thinking was a deer in 1922, and in 1921, and in 1920!"

Apropos of a family of well-known shots, a stalker was once asked if a certain C. was the best. He pondered for a moment, and then delivered this weighty dictum: "He is not. But it would take a pair-son of keen discrimination to discairn it from his conversation."

Stalkers who are keen for "blood" will sometimes hustle a novice in to the firing point, thrust the rifle into his hand, and hiss, "Tak' him quickly. He'll no stand!", a command which is sometimes followed by regrettable results. One such indignantly refused to fire, pointing out that the stag was a young one, likely to improve, and with not a particularly good head or body. The hoary old culprit to whom his remarks were addressed regarded the animal intently for a moment and then in a wheedling whisper replied, "Ay! but just look at the grand br-roadside chance he is giving you!"

I once knew the tenant of a forest whose far beat in certain winds occasionally held a really good stag. Thither one day he proceeded and, after a seven-mile walk, breasted the steep slope from whose summit he intended to spy the small cup-shaped corrie which adjoined the march. Nearing the top, a strange moaning sound was borne to his ears which he could not identify. Peering cautiously over, to his intense astonishment he perceived the corrie to be empty of deer, but in its centre was a gaunt black-clad figure, his beard flowing in the wind, waving his arms, whilst from his mouth proceeded the strange whining drone which had first attracted his attention. The stalker with him regarded this apparition for some moments and then slowly remarked, "It will be the new meenister rehairsing his sairmon!"

Before my friend could stop him he had seized a large rock which he hurled at the figure below. It whizzed past his ear without interrupting the strange sounds which he continued to emit. A second and third bounded and clattered down the hillside and shot past his legs before the outraged stalker could be restrained. Bitterly he gazed at the face which was now scanning the skyline. "The fule," he muttered blackly as he was led away. "He dis'na ken his danger!"

These random criticisms and reflections arise from memories which, alas! are now grown very numerous. We must all get accustomed to change, and if the stalkers have changed so, perhaps, have we.

Even the language falls in unaccustomed cadence on the ears of the older generation. Said one sportsman to another (though this is not a stalking story, it is too good to miss!) at a grouse drive: "Say! Per, how many fowl did you bust that last beat?" To which Per responded: "I gotten twenty-four." "Good for you, Bo! But I beaten you. I bust twenty-six in forty-eight shells."

Perhaps, after all, old memories are best!

CHAPTER XXXVIII

LEAVES FROM A STALKER'S DIARY

"Let diaries, therefore, be brought in use."—FRANCIS BACON.

THE art of deer-stalking is usually dealt with by writers from the amateur's point of view ; and of the various books on the subject only one is, I think, written by a professional stalker. The main object of both the stalker and his "gentleman" when on the hill is usually to get a stag. Not infrequently they look at their objective from different angles.

Recently there has come into my possession a game book, covering the past thirty years, kept by a stalker who has been a friend of mine for the greater part of that period. For twenty-five years he was head stalker on what was before the war one of the best forests in Scotland. Of its condition now it is immaterial to write save to remark that, prior to 1914, the number of stags killed varied from fifty to seventy-five. Since then the numbers have much decreased.

It is not the changing conditions, however, save in a very minor degree, nor the total of stags killed which make the book interesting, but the sidelights it throws on the sport from an angle different to the usual : incidental observations on the management of a forest ; and little bits of human nature which crop up here and there.

For many years the writer notes the presents or tips he received from grateful sportsmen, and very interesting these notes are from a tipper's point of view. I remember, as a boy, hearing that a certain head keeper on a big Highland estate made at least £300 a year in tips. This, I think, was an exaggeration. True, he not only had a forest with a nominal yield of seventy stags under his control, but a large covert shoot, at which perhaps four thousand head were killed in a week, a big extent of grouse moor, as well as a stretch of salmon river. Even so, I rather doubt if he—what shall I say ?—was presented with half the sum mentioned. "De mortuis"—but he was an extremely bad head keeper. My friend the head stalker had none of these extras—pheasants, grouse, salmon, etc.—to augment his earnings, and in the twenty-one years during which he kept a record of the presents he received, they averaged £15 1s. 1d. per annum. The highest total for one

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year amounted to £33, when a large number of guests was staying in the lodge; sixty stags were killed (at the death of fifteen of which he was present); "no good heads and a late season; very nice people, but too many of them for all the ghillies we had." Such is his comment!

In the year in which the record starts he receives £5 "for first tip" from Mr. B., "one of the finest gentlemen who ever came to the Highlands," and to whose kindness I owe many a happy day. He killed two stags that day. "Had a hard walk for last stag and got a hard pull dragging him down." Whatever a stalker's life may be for eleven months of the year, for one month at the least no one has harder physical labour, as anyone who has tried dragging a 16-st. stag single-handed over rough ground, even on the level, will agree.

The gentleman who returns to the lodge from the far beat by car to find a hot bath and a good dinner waiting for him is apt to forget the ten-mile walk his companion of the day's sport not infrequently has to take. I know one stalker who, during the stalking season, very often reached the larder at 10 or 11 p.m. He then skinned and cut up the deer, possibly in soaking clothes. This finished, he walked three miles in the dark by a rough hill track to his house. The following morning he was back at the lodge ready to start the day at nine o'clock. This programme might take place three or four days a week for a month or six weeks.

The sportsman singing congratulatory pæans over the death of his second or third stag would probably modify his exuberance could he hear the remarks with which his success is greeted by the waiting ghillies.

One particular gentleman—a very good shot—had killed two stags and was stalking a third. A ghillie and his companion waited over the ridge until the stalk was finished. "Damn it! there's another!" exclaimed one of them as a shot was heard. To many the end of a successful stalk is the end of their day. To the ghillies it is only the beginning. Often, too, their tips are nil. However, to return to the diary. The writer of it during his first three years as a stalker receives respectively £18, £16, £14. Then he is promoted to head stalker on another forest, and his advent coincides with that of a new tenant. In this season his total rises to £26 10s.

Not everyone is so generous as Mr. B. Another sportsman kills a 16-st. stag which "took a lot of shooting," and rewards the professional with 10s. The whole system of tipping is, of course, quite wrong, though probably ineradicable. In one large forest tips are forbidden, though the guest is allowed to contribute a certain sum towards a central fund. Everyone who has undergone that dreadful last—apparently aimless—saunter, on the morning of his departure, meeting as though by chance and with an air of pleased surprise, the stalkers, keepers, pony boys, chauffeur, butler, footman, *et hoc genus omne*, will realise how greatly such an arrangement adds to the pleasure of a visit.

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Another gentleman in this same year "nearly shot a ghillie, missed one stag: also several others"—a subtle distinction! On a certain day "a fine lot of stags almost came over our heads"—it is easy to picture the scene, also the finale "missed 3 or 4"; and then—nor would pages have amplified the description contained in these four words—"nearly lost the last one!" However, a little later the same rifle enjoys "the best day's stalking he ever had—and I don't expect to beat it again," not without reason, for the bag comprised a 14-pointer and two royals. One of the latter "he rolled over at about 100 yards going full gallop." A red-letter day for both.

In the first few years, in addition to the total number of stags killed and their average weight, with any particulars of interest, such as special heads or weights, other and most illuminating notes are given.

"Self finished wounded—5."

"Fair chances missed—18."

"Lost wounded—4."

"Total shots fired—106."

These latter refer to a total of twenty-eight stags killed under his auspices. Taking into account the different "gentlemen" he was out with—ten in all—the shooting must have been pretty good, though in succeeding years it was better.

The next year he has twenty-six days' stalking, with ten blank days "rather wet and cold but very agreeable so far as sport and gentlemen were concerned."

"Self finished wounded—6."

"Fair chances missed—24."

"Lost wounded—3."

"Total shots fired—97," for a total of thirty stags with nine "gentlemen." One or two notable days occur when a certain "Von" gets an 11-pointer, 19 st. 4 lb.—"the heaviest beast got here since Winans' time. Hit in hind foot on third shot at about 200 yards, followed him, split a piece of horn with first and got him with second, old Von dancing about same as a little boy with happiness." Later, "Von gets that excited he couldn't shoot." Again a delicious epilogue, "got one somehow": I suspect the hiatus here would make good reading. "Von" is out again a week later: "Got a hot chase after two of the wounded ones but managed to get them."

A head is killed—a royal—described as "the best got on this forest yet." The full measurements are given—length 31 inches, span 31½ inches, beam 5½ inches, double brows 10 inches—all first-class except the length.

Lord L.—a famous stalker—is described as a "first-class sportsman and very nice and jolly on the hill. Also a capital walker." He kills three stags, including a royal. "Best day's stalking Lord L. ever had. A hard stalk and splendid shot for 17 st. 9 lb. stag."

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A little later one enthusiast is out for blood and kills four stags—two of them apparently switches, to which is appended the laconic note “killed too many. A. not pleased.”

Twenty-seven days this year, ten blank and twenty-eight stags. “Don’t expect I shall ever have such sport again.”

“Self finished wounded—1.”

“Fair chances missed—5.”

“Total shots fired—71,” for a total of twenty-eight stags with eight “gentlemen.” Very good shooting. Unfortunately this is the last year in which these details are given. In succeeding years I fancy the figures would, as a rule, have been very much higher. Perhaps that is why they have not been kept.

The next season finds the writer head stalker on that forest with which the greater part of the record deals. The first stag at whose death he is present under the new conditions is the first to be killed by a lady, incidentally one of the most beautiful women of her time, whose tragic death took place only a few years ago.

Animals, their first alarm over, make little of a slight wound. A stag whose leg was broken has been known the following season to be the master stag. So at the end of September we come on a note that a stag whose jaw was broken with the first shot kept his hinds together all day. “I finished him in the gloaming about the old house—16 st. 4 lb.”

His summary of the season is rather pessimistic. “Rather wet and cold. Don’t enjoy this place like —. Far too much humbug about home work.” With one of the gentlemen he “has some disputing. A first-class shot but wants it all his own way.”

The first stalk of the next season opens well and he gets three stags in one stalk. The best head killed on the ground this year has a span of $35\frac{1}{2}$ inches. “The widest head I have ever seen,” and the best the owner has killed.

The following year is remarkable for good shooting, but beyond that nothing, though the summary is interesting:

“By far the wettest and most boisterous stalking season I have ever had. Only out 20 days—17 stags. J. rather short owing to the bad condition of stags and weather, I expect; at any rate, I had to stand a good deal of tongue sometimes. I believe we have done as well as any of our neighbours and better than most considering the scarcity of stags, bad wind and weather” (sixty-eight was the total; half this number being killed by one rifle). “Had a capital staff of men. I have found it by far the best way not to take any whisky as I have proved so this season.” A very sound piece of advice to any young stalker.

In the next season he has a new tenant, who is “very stiff to get out

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from the lodge, but I like him better than —, the only drawback is that he is such a poor shot and a bad walker. The best season for sport since I came here if they could only do it. A lot of wounded stags lost and for missing there is no number!"

One interesting event is noted. In June and July, 1897 and 1898, ten young stag calves were marked with silver rings and turned out. In September 1903 the only one to be subsequently identified was killed in the same corrie as that in which he was marked. He was then a 10-pointer of 13 st. 3 lb.

Next year comes an outburst: "I wish — would shoot better—and he would be the most pleasant sportsman I ever had to do with. Missing all the best stags and all the best chances. Missed two splendid 10-pointers. Forest improving every year in numbers and weights, but heads are going back sadly from the cause of killing too many of the promising young stags with nice heads and not shooting enough of heavy stags with poor heads, especially switch horns, of which there are far too many on this ground, also too many hinds."

In the above remarks good forest management is practically summarised.

It is a very human document, though the earlier entries, full of the enthusiasm of youth, make one regret the paucity of the recorder's closing remarks.



CHAPTER XXXIX

POACHING RECOLLECTIONS

“I want deer, roe, fowls.”—HEREWARD THE WAKE.

POACHING is one of the fine arts—how ‘fine’ only the initiated know.” Such was the inscription on the title-page of *The Amateur Poacher*, one of my favourite books as a boy, and now, I suppose, long out of print. Every sportsman must have a sneaking sympathy for the sporting poacher—I mean the man who really does it for the love of the thing as distinct from the “profiteer.” However strong that sympathy, the aggrieved person’s feelings would probably undergo a rapid change if a concrete example presented itself! Round centres of so-called civilisation in game-producing areas there is, and always will be, poaching. I was talking to a policeman friend of mine the other day (in better times I knew him as a ghillie), who told me that he knew all the poachers in a certain northern town. These men made a regular business of it, and never did any other kind of work. One frankly admitted the fact, and told my informant he always had poached and always meant to, thus considerably facilitating the latter’s job! Rabbits, of course, were his chief interest, and grouse when he got the chance. The latter, of course, in the early part of the season pay well. Grouse, black-game, partridges, pheasants, hares and rabbits are comparatively easy to dispose of in more ways than one. Deer are more difficult, and when they are poached for the sake of the venison it is usually because the poacher wants a nice supply of meat for his own use during the winter. The difficulty lies, not so much in getting the beast, as in removing it afterwards. There is, of course, the well-known instance of the amateur who, for a bet, not only killed a stag early one morning, but had it lying on the lawn under the dining-room windows when the owner came down to breakfast! To put a stag on a pony’s back single-handed is a very difficult thing to do—indeed, the hero of this exploit told me it was much the most difficult part of the job!—added to which the spectacle of a laden pony proceeding through the middle of a forest on which it has no right is apt to draw attention to the fact! The poacher usually cuts the stag in half, and thus transports it to his lair in two journeys.

On the west coast, where deer-poaching is most prevalent, it is a comparatively easy matter, as the poacher has only to run his boat up one of the inland lochs indenting the coast line and pick off a stag or hind near the water's edge—they are sure to be low down in the winter—haul it on board, and away before a stalker can get near him. Stags, I fancy, were, or are, chiefly poached for the sake of a good head. Extremely difficult nowadays to get away clear with a really good head on any of the well-known inland forests; the facilities for successful head poaching are, again, very much greater on the coast.

Years ago a friend of mine, who probably knew as much about deer as anyone in Scotland, found himself in a certain Scottish port. Having an hour to spare, he visited the local taxidermist, where his glance lit on a row of very fine stags' heads. He examined them for some time and drew the owner into conversation.

"Some fine heads!" he began.

"Ay! they're gude heads."

"Park?" queried my friend.

"No! they're no park."

"Would you mind telling me where you got them?"

"I would that!"

"Well," said my friend, "I'll bet you five shillings to a sovereign that I'll tell you what forest they were poached from!"

"They're no poached."

But my friend knew better, and then and there named the identical forest from which they had come. It was a little rough on the taxidermist, as there were not half a dozen people whose knowledge would have enabled them to spot the particular type of head. In 1927, to pass a similar judgment would be much more difficult, as types are not nearly so distinct. So taken aback was the owner of the heads that under a promise of secrecy he revealed how he got them. They were poached on a west coast forest and the heads forwarded by steamer in large wooden packing-cases where they were safe from prying eyes.

One of the finest Scottish heads—if not the finest—is a 14-pointer about which very little is known. I was talking about this head one day to the head stalker of a forest where I was a guest. He looked at the picture I showed him for some time, and then exclaimed, "I believe I know where that head came from." He heard the story from a shepherd who lived near a certain hill called Beinn Dronnaig. This shepherd one misty day was coming home through a wild and desolate glen, when suddenly to his astonishment the figure of an enormous man loomed up on the skyline, shaking the wet from his clothes. The frightened shepherd thought at first it was some supernatural being and walked quickly and quietly away, till he had reached

what he thought was a safe distance, when he took to his heels and ran. Glancing over his shoulder, he was horrified to see the huge shape was closer than when he had first observed it. Running on, he soon realised he could not escape and collapsed on the ground. His pursuer came up, reassured him, and casually asked if he knew of any big heads about! The shepherd told him he had better go and see another shepherd, who lived even farther away in the hills. This the stranger promised to do and disappeared. Some days later the shepherd met his friend and asked him if his strange visitor had called. His friend laughed. "Ay, he called," he said, "and if ye can send any ither folk like him along I'll no be displeased." Not long afterwards a big man was seen driving away from Strathcarron, accompanied by a wonderful head, which my informant believed was the one I have mentioned. The man was Roualeyn Gordon Cumming.

In *British Deer Heads* I have mentioned another of his poaching exploits which, could they all be set down, would make a most interesting volume.

In another west coast forest the tenant and his keeper were shooting ptarmigan high up on the slopes of a steep corrie. It was late in the year, and snow squalls blotted out the view before them at frequent intervals. On the opposite side of the corrie, between a quarter and half a mile away, a pair of keen eyes watched them from a hollow in the ground. Presently, just as a snowstorm swept over the hills, two shots rang out. The tenant and his keeper uttered some pungent comments and, when the storm cleared, swept the hillside with their glasses. They saw nothing, and debated at some length whence the sound of the shots had come. It was getting late, and presently they turned and made their way in the gathering gloom to where the lights of the lodge twinkled far below them. The headless carcasses of a royal and a 11-pointer lay for many days where they had fallen, until picked clean by the carrion feeders of the hill, and their bones sank into the green grasses and young heather which the springtime brought. The heads themselves, securely concealed in a large wooden packing-case, travelled further south than they had ever been before.

Again, on the west coast stands a small white-harled house looking out over a gorgeous view of lochs and hills towards the western islands. In it are half a dozen heads, the result of much illicit thought and labour. The best, carrying fourteen points, hangs in the owner's bedroom, and is the first object on which his gaze falls when he awakes. My sympathies are with him, though had I been the lessee of the forest from which the heads originally came, I fear my feelings would not be so entirely disinterested.

The romantic sporting poacher of St. John's day is now, however, a thing of the past, as the editor of the most delightful book ever written on Scottish sport tells us in a note: "The organisation of an efficient police force and more careful watching have rendered his life an impossible one, and the 'bold,

fearless fellow shooting openly by daylight, taking his sport in the same manner as the Laird, or the Sassenach who rents the ground ' has retired into the romantic mists of a bygone day."

Some years ago I came across a ghillie, a great fat, soft-looking fellow weighing 18 st., who seemed lazy and half-witted. He was known locally as the "Loon." He hated work, and not until he had been discharged for incurable incompetence did I discover by roundabout means that he was an accomplished deer-poacher, apparently indulging in it more for sport and venison than for any more lucrative end. Appearances were certainly deceptive in his case, for I cannot imagine a spark of enthusiasm for the hills or anything else lighting the fish-like eye which occasionally I would note turned in my direction. I may add that he saw this account of himself when it originally appeared. It speaks well that I can supplement it by continuing that we are now great friends! I am certain the appearance I have described was assumed!

A certain Speyside poacher was credited by local report with 300 deer in ten years, but whether justly or not I cannot say.

Occasionally Greek meets Greek. A friend of mine was stalking a stag where three marches meet. He was not, I fear, paying particular attention to the line of his own march, but the stag was a good one. He was getting in, and as he was about to fire a rifle rang out. The stag, wounded, galloped down the hill and stood, looking very sick, within shot. My friend, anxious to put it out of its misery, shot the animal and waited for, as he supposed, the owner of the forest or one of his guests to appear. Nothing happened, and he began to wonder at the delay. Presently a head bobbed up from behind a rock and took a hasty survey of the scene below. Then it disappeared. Then a second head bobbed up. My friend made signs for the stalkers to approach. Reassured, two rather sheepish figures drew near. In the subsequent conversation it transpired that it was the "gentleman's" first stag, that he, too, had been taking liberties with the march, and supposed that his stag had been finished off by the rightful owner of the ground; hence his coy advance. However, all ended happily and he retired jubilant, with his head, to relate subsequently to his friends the difficulties attendant on deer-stalking in Scotland and the dangers and civilities to be encountered among its wild hills from the fraternity of poachers.

There is another kind of poaching—though whether it should be included under the head of amateur or professional I leave the reader to judge! I mean the killing of deer in winter by crofters and farmers whose land adjoins a deer forest. That such killing has increased since 1914 cannot be doubted. A number of deer feeding in a field of turnips is certainly a sight not calculated to soothe the nerves of the owner, and many a good stag has been done to death behind the shelter of a stone dyke when the moon is full. "Wiring"



THE WOOD STAG

the runs is hardly ever done in Scotland, and a charge of buck shot or a bullet is the alternative. One can hardly blame the deer when the ground is frozen hard and no other food is available; and one cannot blame the crofter unless, as I have known, a gate be purposely left open. Nor is night the only time when deer are seen in the fields. At nine o'clock one winter's morning during a hard frost a herd of about twenty deer trotted down the road within a hundred yards of a certain lodge. The farmer, a charming fellow, followed them up and killed ten stags before they could escape. Such cases fortunately are rare. Sixty years ago many of the best heads, some of them now historical, were killed during the winter months quite openly; but such killing is now, for the most part, done furtively and in secret.

CHAPTER XL

THE HILL

"And not to know the hills is like never having been in love."

SIR JAMES BARRIE.

I HAVE been fortunate in having stalked in nearly a score of forests in Scotland, and my gratitude to those kind friends who have given me some of the happiest days of my life is more than I can ever adequately express. Particularly is it due to Mrs. Macpherson of Corriemoney. Corriemoney, like many other places in Scotland, is not really natural deer ground. That is, there are no large corries whose slopes rise to between 2000 and 3000 feet, covered with rich grasses, and with natural shelter from every wind that blows. But this is not to say that on such ground deer will not live and thrive, and demand every whit as much skill and care to approach as on a west coast forest where they are seen at their best. It has, indeed, certain advantages, particularly for stalkers who are no longer young. Such a forest is easily walked, except where extensive peat hags break it and render walking extremely tiring, as one has to proceed in a series of leaps. Again, it is much more likely that the stalker will obtain several shots in a day on ground of this nature than in a series of large corries where deer once moved will clear the whole of a beat. In comparatively flat, broken country they will move, once they are disturbed, for perhaps a mile and then settle, affording opportunities for another stalk. Usually, too, in a forest of this nature there is plenty of wood, and if there are deer anywhere about, the woods will hold them. The famous Guisachan royal was killed by Lord Tweedmouth on comparatively low ground not far from Guisachan House and within a mile of Corriemoney. Such forests as Guisachan and Balmacaan hold their stock of deer entirely owing to the fact that they are so well wooded. The great birch woods at the latter place are now fenced off, or about to be, and it is only a question of time before they cease to be a forest in the old sense of the term. Glen Strathfarrar, Glen Cannich, Glen Affric, Glen Moriston, and Glen Garry are all, to mention but a few, well wooded for much of their length and all hold deer. The only drawback to many of the west coast forests is that they have but little wood and consequently no winter shelter, though they contain the rich feeding,

high hills, huge and awe-inspiring corries, and indeed every attribute, with this exception, necessary for first-class deer ground.

For grandeur of scenery and loveliness of colouring the west coast is unsurpassed; indeed, I consider the view from the mouth of Loch Duich on a fine evening, looking towards "The Five Sisters" of Kintail, one of the most beautiful in the world. Kintail is about the steepest ground I have ever been on in the British Isles. At one time it was probably the best forest in Scotland. I have a most interesting letter from an old stalker in which he says:—

"After Kintail was cleared of sheep, the late Mr. W. L. Winans sent me there with instructions to keep the ground as quiet as the grave and to supply him every fourteen days with a report of the number of stags counted on each separate beat. For the first few months I had only a hind, a yearling, and a calf to report. This was not to be wondered at very much, as there was nothing in the forest but sheep, shepherds, and dogs. It was the happy hunting-ground of anyone if any sort of game appeared on it. However, in the course of a little time young stags commenced to filter in. At the end of four years there was a big collection and many fine stags. At the end of seven years the number of stags counted on each separate beat the same day was one thousand seven hundred. I believe the show of beautiful stags in Glenlichd was the finest any living man ever saw. Not a shot was fired in the forest for ten years, and during the last few years, in the middle nineties, the older class of stags were going back and the ground became overstocked. There were no hinds with them, and I never missed many of the stags at the rutting time. They fought among themselves, and it was a terror to many people to walk through the glen even during the daytime."

Such conditions, of course, have long ceased to exist.

The writer of this letter is a most intelligent and clever man, and even among stalkers I have seldom met a closer observer. Several of his opinions are worth quoting. "A switch," he writes, "is not always a switch. This can easily be noticed in a sanctuary where the great bulk of the stags are together from year to year. Following bad springs we find more switches, and again appreciably fewer following bad seasons." This raises the very vexed question to which I have already alluded. Without prolonging the discussion I think there can be no doubt that after a bad winter and spring stags capable of growing good heads will grow horns inferior to those which they would have grown under favourable climatic conditions; while stags with bad heads will grow even worse ones. It is a very difficult, if not impossible, matter to prove to the satisfaction of sceptics, but it seems to me to be a matter of common sense. With regard to the age of deer, the observer I have quoted agrees with my own opinion that under favourable conditions deer would live to twenty, possibly thirty years of age.

DEER-STALKING

This old stalker told me he had never seen one stag kill another in a fight, but he once found one of the best stags in Kintail lying dead at the foot of a rock. On examination he discovered the broken point of a horn, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, sticking in the skull. It had penetrated the brain and caused the animal's death. Anyone who has tried to drive a nail into a stag's skull will realise the terrific force required for a blow of this kind.

Travelling stags, big ones, at any rate, he considers, usually take a small stag with them to watch for danger. They will travel great distances, and stags from Kintail have been killed on Benula, more than twenty miles distant.

I do not think I have ever stalked on finer ground than Knoydart. It is ideally situated,

"Westward away where roads are unknown to Loch Nevis,
And the great peaks look abroad over Skye to the westernmost islands."

Canute's Fiord it was called in the old days, when long-oared galleys lay in wait behind its rocky shores to dash like hungry hounds upon their prey. On a green knoll reached by rock-cut steps still stand the battered relics of an ancient castle. Lusty men of thews and sinews must its inhabitants have been, for cut in the solid rock beside the ruined walls is a grooved trough which held their vessel's keel and kept it safe from winter's storms. Here, too, a great Spanish ship from the Invincible Armada crashed to her doom, and in the features of some of the hillmen it is possible to trace a likeness to her swarthy sailors. Many, many years later the last of the Stewarts with his little band of faithful followers wandered over the hills near by. I like to think that afterwards, when all the glamour and romance had gone, leaving only a worn, broken old man, the skirl of the pipes and the memory of those blue hills had power to kindle a flame that was almost dead and light an eye from which the sparkle had for ever flown. Let that at least be remembered of him!

Still winding about the lonely places you may see paths, now used only by sure-footed ponies and an occasional stalker, which the red-coated soldiery employed to hunt him down and harry his men.

"Ah!" said Willie, as we climbed a slope, "there was a different kind of stalking then!"

Every variety of scenery is there to charm the eye. Sea and loch, brawling burn and placid pool, lush-green meadows and craggy tops, groves of birch and banks of heather, and over all that wonderful, indescribable atmosphere which, in part, made Stevenson exclaim: "The happiest lot on earth is to be born a Scotsman!" I loved it all. The seagulls screaming in the morning over flats where oyster-catchers peered busily for their breakfasts; the sail to the far beat, a seal's round head and soft, staring eyes breaking the calm surface of the loch as we went; the long days on the hill and a return in the

gloaming with the sun setting red over Rhum. It is no easy task stalking here; indeed, it spoils one for almost any ground it has been my good fortune to know. Towering peaks rise sheer from the water's edge, 3000 feet and more; but, though the climb is long and breath short, the view from any one of these giants is alone sufficient compensation for the effort. North, south, east, or west, whichever way you turn, rise hills, broken here by great hollowed corries, in which the mist swirls and boils; there, by a silver streak of sea beyond which the Cuchullins rise. Their names alone sound like music on the ear. Sgurr na Ciche, that sharp-pointed and conspicuous sentinel, stands on the march, and beyond this Corrie na Gall, the grandest corrie I have ever seen, and Glenkingie.

Here I enjoyed one of the best week's stalking which has ever fallen to my lot. Lord Belper is not only an enthusiastic stalker and a very good shot, but one who thoroughly understands the management of deer. I have never seen so many good stags in any forest. It was on this ground that Lord Burton killed all his best stags during his long tenancy of Glenquoich; though Colonel Baillie of Dochfour shot the 13-pointer which I have already mentioned on Glenquoich itself.

Braeroy in Lochaber holds some fine deer ground round Corrie Roy; and there are some wild corries round Sgurr Dhomhail on Strontian.

On Ben Alder, Blackmount, Ceannacroc, or Gaick I have never stalked, but these forests contain some of the finest deer ground, from a spectacular point of view, in Scotland.

At the head of Glen Cannich, too, and in Glomach and Killilan, there is fine deer country. On these latter forests, through the kindness of Mr. Melville Wills and his family, I have enjoyed some of the happiest days of my life.

In the huge extent of Strathconan there are some beautiful corries, and here, as the guest of Captain Christian Combe, on September 9th, 1926, I had one of the best day's stalking it has ever been my good fortune to enjoy. It was a perfect day. A steady breeze, a good light, and any number of fine stags! I killed four good beasts, with an average weight of 15 st. 6 lb., one being a royal. The collection of heads in the lodge is a very large one, and I have never seen so high a standard of excellence for so great a number from one forest. So good is it that it is difficult to pick out one head as being superior to the rest. Strathconan also possesses the finest deer larder I have ever seen. Clean, cool, and bright, it is a model of what such a building should be. At one end the stags are cut up and passed by an ingenious overhead railway to another section which could comfortably hold from fifteen to twenty deer.

Possibly the finest portion of the historic ground of Wyvis is that comprised in Corrie Mohr, but it is the other side of the hill, where the Cabar burn winds its course to the flats of Garbad, that holds the greater interest

for me, for it was here that, on September 29th, 1926, the stag of my dreams materialised, and I fulfilled an ambition I never dared to hope would be accomplished. To the generous kindness of my old friend Colonel Shoolbred I owe many happy days on the hill, but this was a stag that no guest could ever expect to stalk, and when that night he told me that I might keep the head, I must confess that I could find no words to express my gratitude. For the head was that rare thing, an almost perfect royal, of great length, beautiful shape, fine span, and long points, the tops being magnificent. In only one respect was it open to criticism. The horn might have been thicker to render perfection—though I have deliberately written the word “almost,” for no head that I have ever seen is entirely perfect—more perfect; he fell at the conclusion of one of the most exciting stalks I have ever undertaken.

John Grant, the stalker, when I met him that morning on Cairn Gorm, told me that he had seen a good stag, a royal, as he returned home the previous evening, when another royal with a very wide head had defeated us. A little before noon we located him, lying on the slope of Glasslet, some hinds around him, and the whole of the face covered with deer. The wind was from the south-west, and to get above him, the ideal position for every stalk, was impossible, as we should have moved the whole face long before we could have got within range. That he was good I knew, even at the distance at which we spied him, but how good I did not dare to think! By one o'clock we had got to a position within 400 yards from him. He was up and feeding, and when I saw his great horns curving out on each side of his body as he moved away, I realised what my feelings that night would be if our stalk failed! A herd of stags was feeding on the slope just above him, and these would have detected our presence at once had we moved. Cautious as we were, a glint of sun on a glass betrayed us and, not hurriedly, but at a steady walk the whole herd moved over the ridge, taking our quarry with it. Delayed, as is so often the case at such times, by a recalcitrant hind, we gained the ridge that they had left, only to find an empty hillside.

“I hope they'll not cross the burn!” said Grant. “We must get up the hill.”

Up the hill we went, on hands and knees, to find our way blocked by a band of sheep, feeding directly across our proposed route. Still higher we went, the great herd of deer, to the number now of three hundred or more, spread far below us. Slowly as we moved the sheep detected us and, tails flying, galloped off at that irritating scamper which every stalker loathes. All too soon the deer saw them and, at a trot, moved across the burn, leaving some eighty or so of their number behind. Nor were our troubles yet over, for as the mist lifted, when we had all but reached the top of the hill, a knobber was revealed, within 80 yards, feeding rapidly towards us. Quickly the grey wreaths swept aside to disclose behind him twenty or thirty stags,

with one or two good shootable beasts. But shootable beasts were nothing to me, with that great head still visible among the peat hags below! We hissed, and the knobber raised his head, hesitated, and minced back to his fellows. They stood on the skyline, unconscious of their beauty; unconscious, too, of the murderous hate which filled our breasts. Then they trotted steadily off down the hill, and with them went my cherished hopes.

"It's all up," I cried. "They're off!"

"Led by yon beast of a knobber!" echoed Grant bitterly.

And then hope revived, for suddenly they turned, swung to the left, and disappeared over the brow in the direction of the march. Below, the deer were all on the alert, looking up the hill. I could see them moving without the aid of my glass.

"I believe his hinds will cross the burn," said Grant, and to my joy I saw that he was right. The leading hinds had, indeed, already passed it. Down we went feet first, a long, cold, wet slither over soaking grass and hard grey stones; but what did cold, wet, or stones matter at such a moment! At last we gained the burn and comparative safety, for we had till that moment been in full view of all the deer.

Over the top of the bank peered Grant. "He's going to cross!" he whispered.

Another 200 yards of breathless haste down the course of the burn itself, and then, just out of shot, there stepped into view the stag. For a moment he stood, looking up the burn, his great head thrown back, a pale glint of sun gleaming on his crowns. Then he passed on and out of sight. Nor, as we peered over the knoll which had hidden him, a few minutes later, was there a trace of any deer.

Under the cover of the burn's steeply sloping banks we were, it is true, safe; but on our left hand, not 300 yards away, were nearly two hundred deer, and our emergence from cover would be the signal for their headlong flight. Yet it was the only thing to do. Flat on our faces we crawled into the open, and a hasty backward glance revealed stags, hinds, and knobbers on their feet, gazing at us with strained attention. On we crept, gripping the ground with toes and fingers, and then, ten yards from our goal, the inevitable happened. Over the peat hags beyond the burn I saw a mass of bobbing sterns, and red forms wheeling, in headlong retreat. The last ten yards seemed to me to occupy hours. Through the long grasses crowning the knoll 150 yards away I saw a crowd of hinds bunched together, and in their midst the one form I desired above all others to see. His head towered above their cocked ears as with alert, suspicious glances they watched the frightened deer below them. I raised myself to a sitting position on the knoll, and as the hinds scattered in all directions dimly I heard Grant shouting, "You've got him!"

On he galloped, and for the hundredth time that day my heart sank. Two hundred yards he went, on the flat below us, stopped on a sudden, quivered, and collapsed. When we got up to him he was quite dead. I fumbled with a tape. "Thirty-two. Thirty-three." My hand began to shake. "Thirty-four. Thirty-five. Thirty-six," and then the "Thirty-six and a half" on the tape rested against the tip of his horn, and I knew beyond any doubt that I had killed a really first-class head. I have had, thank God! in all humility, many, many happy days on the hill, many glorious moments; but I have never had a moment like that, nor do I suppose that I ever shall again.

Yet even now I never lay step upon a forest path at the morning's start without a quickening of the pulses. Before me, whatever chance befall, lies the hill. What a world of meaning lies for the stalker in those four letters! No wonder David wrote, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills"! Grey days, sunny days, days of mist and gales, or days of calm with long shadows, there is not one whose recollection I would willingly forego.

What memories does the word recall! What loved companions! One above all others, whose little untiring feet have so often kept pace with mine, whose eyes were ever the first to see the deer, and whose love for the hills is only equalled by my own.

CHAPTER XLI

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF DEER-STALKING

"All hunters which have regard to the pleasure of their venerie, ought to be sober and modest in talke."—GEORGE TURBERVILLE.

"OF the making of books there is no end," though the study of deer and their ways never becomes wearisome to the enthusiastic stalker. Many books about deer have been written, and as most, if not all, have been written by men—and one woman, the Marchioness of Breadalbane—who were tremendously keen on their subject, they all, in some degree, possess merit. Many books on hunting were written even in mediæval times, but with these I do not propose to deal at any length. *The Master of Game*, by Edward, second Duke of York, was, as Mr. Baillie-Grohmann tells us, an almost literal translation of that most famous hunting book of all times, Gaston de Foix's *Livre de Chasse*. A new edition by W. A. and F. Baillie-Grohmann, whose knowledge of ancient hunting was very great, was published in 1909. It is a most interesting reprint, but does not deal in any way with modern stalking. Turberville's *Noble Arte of Venerie or Hunting* (1576) is another old book of which a reprint has been issued. It gives much quaint information as regards the old hunting procedure and terms of the Chase.

The first book to deal with stalking as it is practised at the present day is *The Art of Deerstalking*, by William Scrope, originally published in 1838 and a classic of its kind. Hundreds of stalkers have rejoiced in its pages, and though the pedantic observations of Tortoise and the naive or grandiloquent replies of Lightfoot read quaintly nowadays, the true essence of the book remains a lasting testament to a great stalker and a real lover of the hill. Scrope was no mean artist. Indeed, his intimate friend Sir Walter Scott wrote that he was one of the best amateur painters he ever saw. Sir Herbert Maxwell writes: "His love of the hillside and the moor, his tender regard for the animals it was his chief pleasure to pursue, his quick eye for scenery, and his attentive ear for the traditions of the people, combine to make William Scrope one of the most sympathetic and instructive companions in the forest." The book deals almost entirely with the forest of Atholl, where most of Scrope's stalking was done and where he was usually his own stalker. Long

shots were taken even in those days, for he relates how the Hon. Edwin Lascelles at his first attempt at stalking brought down a stag "at full trot" at 312 yards. This was in 1832 and would have horrified Horatio Ross, who quite rightly deplored the tendency to take long shots, truly remarking that for every stag so killed no mention is made of the far greater number that escape to die in agony later on.

In 1880 appeared *A Handbook of Deer-stalking*, by Alexander MacRae, late forester to Lord Henry Bentinck, to which Horatio Ross, the most celebrated shot of his time, wrote an introduction. It is the only contribution to the literature of deer-stalking that I know of written by a professional.¹ For that reason, if for no other, it is valuable for it looks at the subject from a different angle, though it is to be regretted that its author did not indulge in greater detail. Still, it is a useful little book and contains much sound and practical advice.

A few years later (1888) *Deerstalking*, by Augustus Grimble, was published. Like MacRae's, it is a small volume and now out of date so far as rifles are concerned, but it is nevertheless full of useful advice, and no young stalker ought to miss reading it. With regard to telescopic sights, which had then just made their appearance, the author writes that they seem rather to be "suited to sport in distant climes which are visited by the sportsman but once in a lifetime, where shots are few and far between, and where missing a rare beast may be an opportunity lost for ever; but they seem a mistake for deer in Scotland, which if missed one day will live to show more sport on another one." This has always been my own view, save in those cases where failing eyesight and increasing age threaten to curtail those days on the hill which have been the victim's greatest joy. Certainly much of the satisfaction at a good shot or the successful conclusion of a difficult stalk is minimised by their use. As in the case of long shots, they are only too often an excuse for bad stalking.

Much of the advice contained in Mr. Grimble's book will stand a stalker in good stead. If you have been missing stags, I know of no better advice to steady your aim than "to put the rifle sights on the inside of the stag's foreleg, bring them very slowly up the leg till it joins the body, and then, when you 'see brown,' fire." This was the receipt of Colonel Campbell of Monzie, a well-known stalker of his day.

Mr. Grimble writes, "Do not fire at deer facing you." But with this I disagree, provided the stag is comfortably within range and the light is good. Far more deer are missed by vertical than lateral errors; and, when in this position, there is a greater vital area to hit.

Mr. Grimble, in 1896, published *The Deer Forests of Scotland*, which, though it has faults, is by far the best work of its kind ever attempted. In

¹ *Days on the Hill*, by an Old Stalker, was published in 1926 and contains some interesting information.

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addition to some description of the forests themselves it contains many of the traditional and historical incidents connected with them. Later the two publications were issued in one volume. It had the great additional advantage of containing illustrations by Archibald Thorburn.

Lays of the Deer-forests (1848), by John Sobieski and Charles Edward Stewart, consists of two volumes, the second only of which need concern us. Its authors lived for many years on the romantic and picturesquely situated island of Eilean Aigas, whose rocky cliffs rise from the swiftly flowing waters of the River Beaul, and claimed direct descent from Prince Charles. They were accorded by many, royal honours. In the second volume, submerged in a mass of notes and appendices, the diligent reader will find much that is of interest with regard to deer.

One of the best known books on deer-stalking, copies of which still command high prices at sales, is *Deer-stalking in the Highlands of Scotland*, by Lieut.-General Henry Hope Crealock. Published in 1892, it is copiously illustrated by the author. Many of his pen-and-ink sketches are excellent, full of life and vigour, though his more ambitious work is apt to become laboured. Not infrequently, too, he falls into the common error of making the stags' horns much too big for their bodies. With the best intentions it is not easy to avoid doing this. Actually a few inches make all the difference between a good head and a first-class trophy, so far as Scottish heads are concerned, and a very slight exaggeration in a drawing makes a head appear enormous. Joseph Wolf, probably the greatest animal artist that ever lived, once told a friend of mine that the stag was, without exception, the most difficult animal to attempt to draw. Crealock stalked in about twenty different forests, and I have been on the hill with several stalkers who knew him. At times he used to hold a bunch of heather or grass in front of his face when crawling! In his book are some interesting notes on the introduction of park deer in the early days of modern stalking. One curious statement is that all the evidence he collected tended to show that stags did not eat shed antlers, though hinds did. This observation is, of course, quite incorrect. Stags as well as hinds gnaw shed horns and, at times, those of the living animals.

The High Tops of Blackmount (1907), written by the Marchioness of Breadalbane, is a pleasant little book by a real lover of the hills. Her outlook may be summed up by a sentence in one chapter: "There is no country like Scotland, and no sport like deer-stalking."

British Deer and their Horns (1897), by John Guille Millais, is about the best of the many books on sport and natural history produced by its gifted author; not even excepting *A Breath from the Veldt* or *The Life and Letters of Sir John Millais*, a difficult book for a son to write and a model of what a biography should be.

He it was who fostered my early love for stalking and, what is more, inspired me to follow that most fascinating of all sports—the pursuit of the roe with a rifle. How many hours have I spent looking at his delightful drawings, and how many handling with him the horns of stag or roebuck, exchanging the while reminiscences of their pursuit amid the corries and woods of the land we both love so well. There was a stag, too, a stag of ten—but that is another story!

The letterpress of *British Deer* is a mine of information in regard to everything connected with their horn-growth and habits; while for those who love the roe no other book gives a tenth of the facts which he will find here. The incidents with which every stalker is acquainted have never been portrayed with greater truth and realism than in these pages. Mr. Millais' sketches of animals in motion are unsurpassed, and such drawings as those of "Stags sparring," "Hind charging an eagle which has alighted near her calf," "Attitudes of a roebuck at bay," and "Roebucks fighting," are gems of their kind. In his monumental work on *British Mammals*, and also in his contribution to *The Gun at Home and Abroad* (1913), Mr. Millais has set down much that is valuable to the student of deer.

One of the most important contributions to the literature of the red deer is *The Wild Red Deer of Scotland*, by Mr. Allan Gordon Cameron (1923). The book is founded on a series of papers entitled "Notes from an Island Forest" (the forest being Jura, which was for many years occupied by Henry Evans, a keen student of deer), originally contributed to the *Field* at various dates prior to 1914. The author describes the growth of modern stalking and the defects in the sport to which it has given rise. He suggests the remedies by which it may be improved and advocates the increased adoption of personal stalking, as distinct from that conducted under the guidance of a professional. He also goes very fully into the natural history and habits of red deer. Four chapters are devoted to antlers, their growth, form, development, measurements, and improvement. His suggested reforms are perfectly sound in principle, but under present conditions very difficult of attainment. Like all suggested reforms for the improvement of deer, that fatal obstacle, the yearly tenancy, stands blocking the way. Mr. Cameron points out, what many are apt to forget, that the pre-eminence of the hill stag as an animal of sport in Scotland has been acquired by force of circumstances, opposed to the animal's natural habits, and is a phenomenon without parallel in the history of the species. The red deer is by nature a woodland animal, and it is in well-wooded countries that he attains his greatest development. Nearly every year some allusion is made to the "deterioration of Scottish heads," and it is entertaining to note that so long ago as 1855 prominent stalkers were engaged in the same argument. Every student of deer knows how an improvement in heads could be effected if economic conditions permitted.

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Mr. Cameron's solution is a policy of give and take between stalker and farmer; replanting, and the introduction of sheep and, to an even greater extent, cattle.

Henry Evans, to whom I have already alluded, published privately in 1890 a very interesting account of Jura red deer. He kept most careful notes and statistics of the deer he had under observation, and they are of great interest. It is not easy to get a copy of this work.

Mr. Alexander Inkson McConnochie has published *The Deer and Deer Forests of Scotland* (1923) and *Deerstalking in Scotland* (1924). The former volume contains some interesting historical notes.

Of the more scientific works, *The Deer of all Lands*, by R. Lydekker (1898), is valuable; while *The Growth and Shedding of Antlers* (1920), by Professor MacEwen, goes very deeply into the subject in a manner which will be beyond the scope of the general reader.

All the books which I have mentioned are monographs. There are, in addition, many volumes dealing with sport which devote a space to deer and stalking. The most important of these, from a practical point of view, is that contributed to the excellent *Fur and Feather* series by the late Cameron of Lochiel (1896). Not only had he great knowledge of the deer themselves, but he understood intimately the management of deer forests and, in addition, set down his knowledge in a most attractive and delightful manner. Yet it is not his sound advice as to the control of a forest, the practice of deer-stalking, or its social and economic aspects which linger in the mind of one stalker thirty years after his pages were written. It is the half-guilty but wholly delighted admission that he had, in the days of his youth, on days unsuitable for stalking, driven "the sanctuary," and, against the canons of true forestry which he had himself laid down, "gone out to the very middle of the forest with a couple of pure bred deer hounds, accompanied by anyone of either sex who had sufficiently good wind, a supple figure, and active limbs, and coursed, yes, actually coursed, a cold stag—generally unsuccessfully—sometimes bringing him to bay, very rarely pulling him down. We are older," he writes, "and wiser now, but alas! do we have the same fun?"

In the Badminton Library (1885), Vol. 2, *Shooting*, Lord Lovat contributed a chapter on deer-stalking and another on deer forests. Both are excellent: the latter is particularly sound and might be studied with advantage by some of the critics of deer forests who know very little about the subject.

Sport, by Bromley Davenport—of which the concluding sentences of "Deer-stalking" were written only a few days before the author's sudden death—contains a comparison between the "real" and the "artificial," to the detriment of the latter. Stalking an animal "on its own primeval and

ancestral ground, as yet unannexed and unappropriated in any shape or way by man," is, there can be no question, a far higher form of sport than stalking an animal under conditions such as prevail in Scotland. But the very artificiality of the latter creates the difficulties which have to be overcome to render it successful, and it seems a little severe to label it "only a poor parody of the first." That Bromley Davenport himself thoroughly enjoyed stalking in Scotland his delightfully written pages testify. Indeed, he himself admits that he believes "artificial" stalking to be the more difficult of the two forms of sport, and his account of the death of "Clubfoot" elevates that animal to a position second only to that of St. John's "Muckle Hart."

Charles St. John's *Wild Sport and Natural History of the Highlands* (1845) was followed by *A Tour in Sutherland* (1849). Both contain notes on deer. The chapter entitled "The Muckle Hart of Braemore" is probably the best known account of deer-stalking which has ever been written. Hundreds of schoolboys—as well as their elders—have devoured it and resolved that they too, in the years to come, will pursue a "muckle hart" and find in its pursuit some of the joy and freedom from care which its historian enjoyed. Photographs and measurements of this famous stag appear in an earlier chapter of the present volume.

A Highland Gathering, by E. Lennox Peel (1885), contains several chapters on deer-stalking written with real feeling. One passage of great beauty always lingers in my mind: "And in that great quiet of the early dawn, as each hilltop stood out momentarily in a stronger glow, I felt that, even if no deer were seen, I had done wisely in coming out to see the sun rise over the everlasting hills. It was one of those mornings that a man never forgets, that crop up again in his dreams, and come across him, full of tender memories, when he is waking." It has consoled me for many a blank day, and I treasure the little volume for these sentences, apart from anything else.

The Moor and the Loch, by John Colquhoun, published in the middle of the last century, is another pleasantly written book containing some references to deer and a chapter on roe-hunting, in which the author goes fully into their chase with hounds and concealed rifles. I cannot agree with his dictum that roe-stalking is "a wretched burlesque of deer-stalking"!

In *Cattle, Sheep, and Deer*, by Duncan MacDonald, a chapter is devoted to the latter animal.

Practical Rifle Shooting (1906), by Walter Winans, was written by a first-class shot and one who had had great experience. It contains a chapter on deer-stalking, another on deer-driving, and a third on roe deer shooting. The really practical advice in this little volume cannot be overestimated. It is certainly the best I have ever come across.

In *Wild Sport with Gun, Rifle, and Salmon Rod* (1903), and again in *Wild Sport and Some Stories* (1912), Mr. Gilfrid Hartley includes half a dozen

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chapters on stalking, mostly in Monar, though in the latter one deals with Glen Veagh in Ireland. These chapters are among the best of their kind.

Autumns in Argyllshire (1900), by Hon. A. E. Gathorne Hardy, is a delightfully written book with several chapters devoted to deer. "Chasing the Roe" is one of the few accounts appearing in books on Highland sport which do justice to that splendid little animal. Some of Archibald Thorburn's best work enriches its pages.

Forty-five Years of Sport (1891), by J. H. Corballis, has a section devoted to stalking which contains some interesting reading. Strange to say, it contains no reference to a very fine roebuck which the author killed at Beaufort in 1879, now in Mr. J. G. Millais' collection, one of the two most massive heads I have ever seen.

In *The Natural History of Sport in Scotland* (1920) Mr. Tom Speedy has one chapter on deer-stalking in which he relates some instances of the great distances stags will wander of their own accord.

The two chapters on stalking contained in *A Hundred Years in the Highlands* (1921), by the late Osgood MacKenzie of Inverewe, are chiefly remarkable for the picture they give of the sport as it was carried on in the old days.

Amid the High Hills (1923), by Sir Hugh Fraser (now one of the judges of H.M. High Court), contains many delightful chapters on deer and their ways. Written by an ardent stalker and hillman, the distinguished author has in its pages conveyed something of his own intense enthusiasm for the high tops to his readers. No more delightful book has been placed in the hands of stalkers for many years.

There are very few books dealing with the roe. I have already alluded to those which contain references to this fine little animal, including *British Deer and their Horns*, which is by far the best. Roe-stalking and roe heads are here for the first time given their proper places.

"Snaffle's" monograph on the roe—*The Roe Deer* (1894)—is the only book I know of entirely devoted to this animal. It contains a great deal of valuable information, though there is not very much about stalking. The chase of the roe with hounds is described, and it is a book which no one interested in the subject can afford to neglect.

In *Lays of the Deer Forests* the pursuit of the roe with hounds in combination with the rifle is described. *Autumns in Argyllshire* also has a chapter on this form of sport. The former volume, now out of date as regards rifles, etc., was written by a real roe enthusiast who had exceptional opportunities for enjoying his favourite sport.

Many articles and stories appear from time to time in various papers dealing with the present subject. Some of them are good, and many too trivial for mention. One of the best accounts of a stalk I have ever

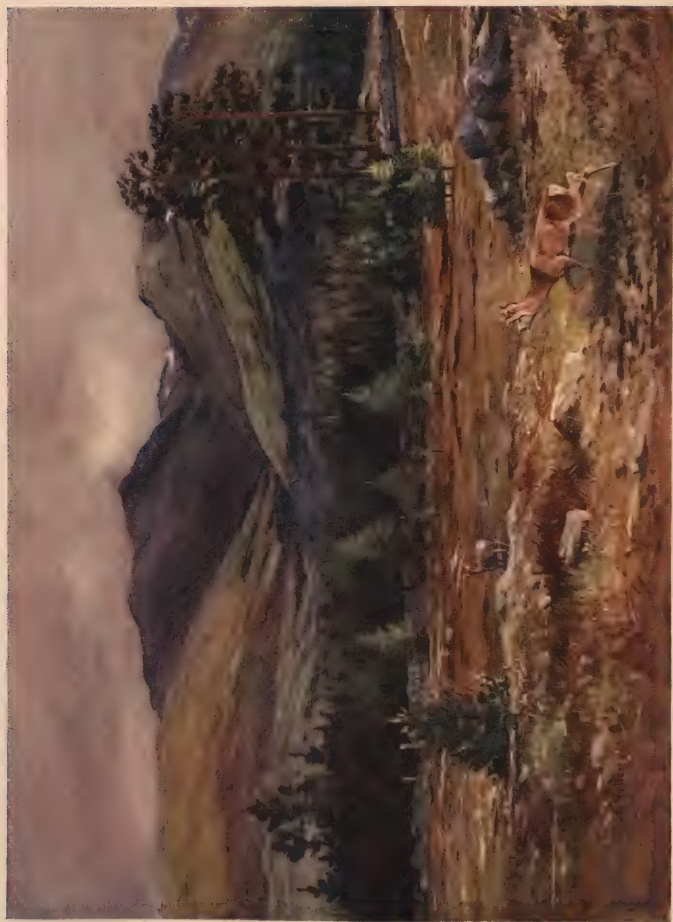
come across was written by the late Edward Ross and appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* about 1892. Two others stand out in my memory as being worthy of more than a passing reference. One, "My Lord the Buck," appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* nearly twenty-five years ago and was from the pen of Mr. H. M. Warrand. In it he describes his acquaintance with a buck which he knew from a fawn until it developed into a "cunning, cunning old buck." The description of the doe initiating her children into the mysteries of the fairy ring, and indeed the whole idyll, is so charmingly written that it has always been my lasting regret that Mr. Warrand's pen has been so surprisingly inactive. The loss to lovers of roe is great.

The second contribution to which I have referred was entitled "The Grey Stag of Corrie Vean." It was written by Percy Stephens, of whom (I am sure that it is my own ignorance which is responsible!) I have never heard before or since, and appeared in one of the early numbers of *The Badminton Magazine*. The grey stag was famous, and many celebrated shots had striven for his undoing. Then "The Boy" appears on the scene and, borrowing a rifle on the plea of "getting some rabbits," when his elders and betters are otherwise engaged, sallies forth in the hope of "tickling up" a roebuck. "He felt quite sure in his own mind that it would be perfectly easy to cut off the head of so small an animal with his pocket-knife: he could hide the body in the wood and smuggle the head back to Eton in his hat-box, and then—— But at this point even the Boy's imagination could not do justice to the glorious picture of self-glorification which it had raised. He could only imagine the head as it would appear on the wall of his room at his dame's, and himself the centre of an admiring and envious crowd of lower boys to whom he was dilating at length on the ferocity of roe deer, and the skill and courage required to overcome them."

The Boy did not find his roe: he found instead, having taken a nap in the heather, the grey stag feeding within range. After prolonged hesitation he decided to risk it and take a shot. "For one sickening second" after he had had the courage to fire "the Boy thought that his turn to be 'tickled up' had come," but with a furious final rush the great grey stag lurched, and then staggered over like a shot rabbit. After firing another bullet—"into the haunch, by the way"—the Boy walked up and touched it with his foot. The grey stag was quite dead.

It was a 14-pointer and weighed 19 st., and the Boy departed—having been discovered wandering on the hill, wet and famished, at a late hour that night—tipless and forlorn, with all the cheek washed out of him; but I often think of him with affection, horrid child that he was, for he was the unwilling hero of the best story about my favourite sport that I have ever read.

ROE DEER



UNREQUITED AFFECTION (ROTHIEMURCHUS)

From a Drawing by Frank Wallace.

Although he had a job
that was not very good,
He could not get on
as he knew he should
and he was not
well liked by his
workmen and his
bosses and his
neighbours and his

CHAPTER XLII

A PLEA FOR THE ROE

"The Rowebuck is a good little beaste and goodly for to hunt."

THE MASTER OF GAME.

A ROEBUCK! The very name is magical! I but hear it, and in a flash am transported to those happy hunting grounds which have been my greatest delight for thirty years.

Even the Tottenham Court Road is, to me, a not altogether loathsome spot, for does there not stand, dominating its dreary length, flashing and glittering in the sun, a large gilded model of that most sporting of all the beasts of venerie?

It was in 1896 that I slew my first buck, hornless, alas! that I should have to confess it, and, what is far, far worse, with a shotgun! Its little head, bleached and whitened by the sun, still hangs in my room and never fails, whenever my eye chances to fall on it, to remind me of the sins and ignorance of youth. For ignorance it was which led me to commit the crime. No one had ever impressed upon me the enormity of my offence in the opinion of all true sportsmen. To me a roe of any kind was big game, and with a capital B! But it taught me a lesson, and from that day to this I have never fired a gun at anything larger than a hare.

The buck at whose heart the rifle of Charles St. John was aimed and "whose beauty saved him" is immortal. Truth to tell, I suspect the grace and loveliness of this fairy of the woods have prolonged his life many a time. The late Walter Winans wrote: "Last year, at a big wild boar drive in the Ardennes, I was next to a man who has shot many boar and deer. A fine roebuck passed slowly close to him and he did not even take up his gun, although he had a pair, in the usual way, lying cocked on his 'rest.' When that beat was over I asked him why he did not shoot. He said that the little buck came along skipping, and, as the wind blew the dead leaves about on the snow, he played about and hit at them with his fore-feet like a kitten, until he could not find it in his heart to kill the little animal." Such a picture would melt the heart of any but a Bolshevik, and yet——! It was Oscar Wilde who said that each man killed the thing he loved, and certainly I have never yet met a roe-stalker who did not love the roe.

Foresters hate him. They have some ground for their feelings, as unfortunately it cannot be denied that roe do damage young trees. The late author of that delightful book *Autumns in Argyllshire* considered, however, that the harm they did to woodlands did not amount to much; and in this opinion he was joined by C. J. Mansel Pleydell, who was entitled to speak with great authority. The unpreventable damage done by roe is more than balanced by their economic value. They abound in Germany, or did before the war, at any rate, and the German agriculturist would have had something to say about it if he had suffered to the extent to which the enemies of the roe would have us believe. A German writer some years ago calculated that 200,000 roe were shot annually in Germany alone, representing a value of from £150,000 to £200,000. It seems very hard on the roe and a great waste that he should be so universally condemned without fair trial. His venison is certainly the best of any deer—"You may hunt him at all times alike, for his venison is never fat, nor never out of season—and their flesh is good meat," wrote Turberville; the skin makes very good leather, and the marrow yields a fine oil. No animal adds such beauty to a woodland scene, and his horns provide a trophy of which any sportsman, however widely he has ranged, may be proud. To the majority of persons he is, comparatively speaking, unknown. That such animals do exist they may be aware, gaining their knowledge from the badly stuffed specimen which leans at them with bulging eyes from some dark corner—"the deer which Daddy shot in Scotland!"—or from a dead doe hanging in a shop window. Even to the average sportsman he presents no special claim to distinction, and is usually regarded as an unfortunate beast which may occasionally be potted, if one is lucky, with No. 5 shot at a drive for black-game. We pride ourselves on our sporting instincts, but with regard to the roe we can very well afford to take a lesson from continental sportsmen, who quite rightly consider it most unsportsmanlike systematically to kill roe with shotguns. In flat country there may be danger in using a rifle, but this can be mitigated to a great extent by using a special light charge as is done in such localities in Germany. In the early morning, too, which is the best time for stalking roe, there are few people about.

In many places ghastly annual butcheries, known as "keepers' shoots," occur. In these neither age nor sex is any safeguard, and in the majority of cases it is the wily old buck who escapes, even though his horns have been shed, and it is his unfortunate wife and children who fall victims to a charge of shot. Forced as they usually have been out of some dense thicket, the poor little beasts break, dazed and frightened, within a few yards of the line of bold and fearless sportsmen, who very often—and these not always the younger ones—fire indiscriminately at anything with four legs of which they happen to catch a glimpse. Needless to say, far more roe get away wounded

at performances of this sort than are killed outright. Lord Granby wrote: "I am not acquainted with a more unsatisfactory and disagreeable task than that of killing roe with a shotgun." None of those who have ever done so will be found to disagree with him. A roe hit in the neck with a charge of shot at 20 yards will go over like a rabbit, but as a rule they are more likely to be peppered all over the body or the hind-quarters at 40 yards, when they linger in agony, or, mere skin and bone, survive to perish in the winter. A wound of this kind sometimes affects the head, and at times seems to make very little difference. I have seen a quite good head grown by a buck which when skinned was found to have been hit in the head with No. 4 shot, and in the body with No. 6.

I asked a man the other day if he had ever done any roe-stalking in Scotland. His reply was, "No. I have always considered them rather uninteresting little brutes!" People who talk like this do so either because they are totally ignorant of the animal of which they speak so slightly, or because they have never taken the trouble to follow *with a rifle* a sport which is in many respects superior to the pursuit of the red deer.

I do not know what is the percentage of bucks which might grow first-class heads as compared to the larger animal, probably a good deal smaller. But I do know that any genuine roe-stalker who kills one really first-class head in a lifetime is extremely lucky. The roebuck is the only animal so far as I am aware whose ancestors did not in the past grow heads superior to their present representatives. It is quite possible that the roebuck has yet to be born whose horns shall eclipse all existing trophies and render their possessor famous for all time.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE MANAGEMENT OF ROE

"The Rowe keepeth in the strong thickets."—GEORGE TURBERVILLE.

THE management of a roe shoot does not present the same difficulties, nor is it anything like so expensive as a deer forest.

Unfortunately very few places are really adaptable for this purpose. When, however, conditions are favourable, and there is a stock of roe on the ground, five years should suffice to establish a roe shoot. It should then be possible to kill several really good bucks every year. About 2000 acres is an ideal size if there is plenty of good cover. The same factors govern the improvements of a shoot of this kind as they do of a forest for red deer. The shooting of bad stock of both sexes at the right time, and their proper proportion in relation to each other, are the chief points to bear in mind.

"Snaffle" writes: "There is nothing more suitable to roe than a typical English wood, of which we all know specimens—a wood cut partly in rotation, so as to show alternating tracts of high and low cut; and it is none the worse if it have a belt of spruce in places. Only in one respect do some of our English woods fail to fulfil the requirements of roe, and that is in the absence of those open glades so common on the Continent. Some of them, indeed, notably in the north of Hampshire, are surrounded by arable also, so that the deer cannot get meadow grass without going a long way for it; and meadow grass is the very best food for roe. In fact, it is not going too far to say that the roe would not stay in a wood surrounded with arable unless clearings were made in the wood and sown with a mixture of timothy, ryegrass, and clover, but would feed entirely in the cultivated fields. Wet pastures are abomination to roe, though they love the fields that border on a purling stream."

My friend Colonel J. Hamilton Leigh for some years rented Whatcombe. Here the woods form an ideal home for roe, and this enthusiastic roe-stalker secured, by his care and good management, in spite of many great difficulties, some very good heads. Whatcombe adjoins Milton Abbey in Dorsetshire, and I propose to illustrate my remarks on the management of a roe shoot with some particulars from this place.

Scottish roe were turned out here in 1800 by Lord Dorchester. In 1829 C. J. Mansel Pleydell took some to Whatcombe, and it was in all probability one of the descendants of these roe which was killed in Devonshire in 1922. It was not known at first to what species the stranger belonged; though "Snaffle" records that a roe was killed by foxhounds in this county after a run of eight miles.

The woods at Whatcombe extend to about 400 acres and consist of oak, larch, and spruce plantations, with much undergrowth and thickets of bracken and hazel, furnishing ideal homes for the roe, who love plantations a year or two after they have been cut and the undergrowth is growing. The little deer are also very fond of ivy, and with this Colonel Leigh used to supply them during the winter. In time they got to know when the ivy cart was due, and would almost follow it in their anxiety to get at their favourite food. For hours I have watched a roe nibbling off the leaves of this plant, each leaf being nipped neatly off its stem.

Great care should be taken to keep the proportion between the sexes correct, in the same manner as with red deer. One deer to every $12\frac{1}{2}$ acres is about the right proportion; with a slight preponderance of does over bucks. Only adult bucks should be killed, apart from sickly animals and bad heads, unless the stock is getting too big.

"Snaffle" describes a German shoot of 6500 acres where before the war 676 bucks and 514 does were killed in nine years. There were between 600 and 700 head on the ground, and it was found necessary to increase the number of those killed, as, in spite of the figures given, the ground was becoming overstocked. It is impossible to pick out yeld does at a drive, and the best way, if the stock is to be kept in the right proportion, is to kill weedy yearlings and fawns. By this means the best does are kept for breeding.

The period at which a buck's horns are at their fullest development is not long: which is one reason why good heads are so scarce. They are probably at their best from seven to nine years old, and the proportion of bucks which would grow first-class heads if they were permitted to live is, I think, very limited.

On a properly managed shoot a keen stalker would know pretty well what bucks were on the ground, and, while allowing himself four or five good bucks in their prime, would pick off old bucks with bad heads which were going back, and young bucks which would never develop good heads.

The Dorset roe in their summer coats are as red as those in Scotland, though the Hampshire roe are more inclined to yellow. I do not pretend to an intimate acquaintance with these latter, but in one mounted head I have seen there is no white nose patch, which always adds a touch of distinction to a Scottish head.

At Whatcombe the bucks were clean by March 23rd or even earlier, and

the horns were shed by the end of October. This is very early as compared with Scotland, though one would expect them to be earlier in the south. I have never seen a buck clean in Scotland before May 18th, and I have killed bucks as late as the third week in November with horns still on, though they showed distinct signs of shedding. Shed roe horns are found but rarely. I have found many a red deer horn, but only once, I think, that of a roebuck. The following old rhyme in the *Book of St. Albans* suggests that even in old days they were scarce:—

“At Saynt Andrewes day his hornes he woll caste,
In moore or in mosse he hydyth theym faste
So that noo man maye theym soone fynde,
Elles in certayn he dooth not his kinde.”

The latest date at which I have known a buck carrying his horns was Christmas Day. The horns fell off when he was shot. This was at Erchless, near Beaulay.

The heaviest Dorset roe of which I have any record weighed 56 lb. without the gralloch, for which 10 lb. may be allowed.

English roe are larger than Scottish ones, as might be expected. Of the average weight of the latter I shall have something to say later; but the former, in the case of twenty-six adult bucks, weighed just under 60 lb. before gralloching.

Colonel Leigh tells me that he has seen as many as twenty-five roe in a morning's stalking at Whatcombe, chiefly bucks. Five of these bucks were in one party.

Some of the Dorset heads have unusually long horns; but the best heads from England and Scotland are indistinguishable in their general characteristics.

“Adult roe,” to quote Snaffle again, “are said to eat from three to four per cent of their own weight daily, and growing animals five per cent. So a good roebuck of four stone will eat about $2\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. in a day, while a fawn of 25 lbs. weight will eat about half that quantity. Supposing the head of roe to be two hundred, averaging forty-five pounds in weight, the total weight of their forage would amount to nearly $3\frac{1}{4}$ cwts. per diem. But such a head of roe requires a shooting of some four square miles to carry them.”

Such figures, at any rate, form a basis for calculation.

Buckwheat, late peas, barley, oats, and Jerusalem artichokes are favourite food of roe. In the winter, clover, hay (in shelters), roots, acorns, and locust beans may be given if desired.

The Germans, with their passion for reducing everything to rule, say that there should be one “salt lick” to every 70 to 100 acres of wood. All deer love salt, and if this is provided so much the better.

Salt licks, by the way, were the special privilege of the sovereign on the

Continent, and a law inflicted a fine of 200 florins on any one infringing this prerogative.

There are still plenty of roe in places in England if you know where to look for them. At Petworth they are said to be indigenous, and I have been told, though I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the statement, that when the stock was thought to be increasing to too great an extent, as many as two hundred have been killed there in a winter.

A few years ago Mr. Archibald Thorburn told me he had seen a roe cross the road close to Godalming. It is extraordinary how close to the haunts of man they will live and thrive, often without their neighbours being even aware of their existence. To some extent this is so with all deer. In parts of Hampshire there are a number of fallow deer, but many of the people living on the spot have never seen one!

Besides being found in Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, Dorset, and Somerset, Mr. Abel Chapman records them breeding quite close to his house in Northumberland (this was in 1917), and in Cumberland they are said to be indigenous. A buck was killed at Brampton in 1921 which weighed 49 lb. after being skinned and gralloched.

There are, or were, roe in Epping Forest of which the original stock came from Dorsetshire. Major Buxton once told me that he had seen a roe chased by beagles run straight to where another roe was standing and instantly squat. The second roe waited till hounds were close and in view, and then bounded off, leaving the hunted roe squatting.

Several books give accounts of the pursuit of roe with a scratch pack or slow-running hounds. With such a pack they can be driven by anyone who understands their habits to places where they can be shot with the rifle. They will adopt the same stratagems as will the red deer when hunted, as the above incident shows.

I have had no experience of roe-hunting, as distinct from stalking, and beyond "Snaffle's" monograph on the roe I know of no book which gives any information on the subject. *Autumns in Argyllshire* describes moving them with a scratch pack to concealed rifles; and in *Lays of the Deer Forests* there are many notes dealing with this form of sport; while Colquhoun also describes it in *Moor and Loch*.

The following letter from Major C. E. Radclyffe, Hyde, speaks for itself, and there is nothing new to add to this subject:—

"As regards your letter on the subject of roe deer in Dorset, I don't think there is anything fresh to be said about them since the book you refer to was written by 'Snaffle' (The Marquis Ivrea), and all that portion which refers in his book to roe deer in Dorset was written here from information I gave to him. At the present moment I believe no one hunts roe deer in this county with hounds, although they are still quite numerous; but I do not think

they are anything like as plentiful as they were some twenty years ago, chiefly owing, in my opinion, to two causes: (1) A great number of the big fir woods which formerly existed here were cut clean to the ground during the war. These woods of coniferous trees were the favourite haunt of roe deer in this locality, and since their disappearance the roe deer have been forced to take up their abode in smaller woods where they are more easily seen and shot. (2) The great increase of smallholders and small farmers, all armed with guns, who hold land around some of the best roe deer haunts has played havoc with the deer, as these men shoot at every deer they can see, by day or night, in their fields. Consequently, if I do get a good deer now I generally find, on skinning him, that his hide is full of shot ranging in sizes from No. 1 to No. 7.

"You can quite well imagine, therefore, that big game are now seldom seen, and I doubt if such will ever be seen again here as are now in my museum and in some of the other private collections, such as those at Milton Abbey and Whatcombe House. In the latter House is the largest head I have ever seen in this county. It is in the velvet and when measured by Ivrea and myself some years ago it was $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length as far as I can remember, but the exact measurement is given in Ivrea's book, which I have not at hand now to refer to. [The exact measurement is, I fancy, $11\frac{3}{8}$ inches.]

"I have, in former years, had several heads from this place here, which have been 10 inches and up to $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. I have also had two heads carrying seven points and one with eight points, but I regret that the latter was destroyed in a fire here some years ago when I lost many of my trophies.

"I don't think I can tell you much more, except that the last remaining strongholds of the roe deer in Dorset in any numbers are at Milton Abbey, Whatcombe, Bere Wood and this place here."

The late Mr. Assheton Smith, in a letter to me from Vaynol, North Wales, in 1902, wrote:—

"I have had roe here for many years—in fact since 1874. The only thing I have to complain of is that a good many are poisoned through eating yew of, which there are unfortunately a great quantity in these woods. They range all through the park, as there are only wire fences, through which they creep. They keep to the woods chiefly and are seldom seen in the open. I got some of the first from Germany and have had others from Dorsetshire."

I fancy that there are few, if any, of these roe left now—1926.

Attempts have been made to cross the Asiatic and European races, but I have never heard of such an experiment being successful.

The Asiatic variety (*Capreolus pygargus*) is the largest of the roe deer species, and its existence was unknown to most persons until a comparatively recent period. For this reason, even moderately sized specimens of its horns

(which are sometimes as long as 17 inches and 18 inches) used to be sold by sharp dealers to continental collectors who were unaware of their existence, as choice specimens of the "Urbock," or ancient roe of Central Europe, obtaining prices that worked out at more than the weight of the heads in gold. The difference between the German and the Siberian roebuck horns can, however, be easily told, for while the burrs of the German deer are close together, often touching each other, the burrs of the Siberians are smaller and, with very few exceptions indeed, separated by a space of from half an inch to an inch.

The Asiatic roe differs from our own in several respects. He is a larger animal, standing from 28 to 34 inches at the shoulder, has shorter and more hairy ears, a larger rump patch, and carries far finer and rougher antlers. The face markings are not so conspicuous; the coat is paler, and in the winter much rougher and thicker. The specimens obtained in the Thian Shan are somewhat different to the typical race, carrying as a rule longer heads.

Colonel J. Hamilton Leigh in 1901 purchased from Hagenbeck a pair of Siberian roe kids. They arrived in Scotland at the end of October, the doe dying a few days later. The buck flourished, and in the winter of 1902 was moved to Matchams Park in Hampshire. A Siberian doe was then put with him, but she shortly afterwards died, never having been very healthy. Colonel Hamilton Leigh then procured two Danish roe (females) from Hagenbeck. The Asiatic buck covered these does in July 1904, but they both died in the following year. The buck himself died in September 1904. Colonel Leigh says: "The cross is impossible with a Siberian buck and West European does; with a Siberian doe and Scots buck it would be all right." A half-bred buck crossed with pure Siberian does would probably give good results. Roebucks are notoriously dangerous pets, and Colonel Leigh's buck was kept in a paddock of four acres during the last summer of his life owing to his bad temper. He usually had the run of 350 acres of fir wood and heather. The cause of his death was unknown, the few wild roe in this part of the country doing well. Mr. Walter Winans used to keep a pair of Siberian roe in a small park, but they both died comparatively young.

CHAPTER XLIV

ROE AND THEIR WAYS

"The Rowe is a beast well known and easie to hunte, and yet few huntsmen know his nature."—GEORGE TURBERVILLE.

THOUGH roe does are charming little beasts when kept in captivity, the bucks, as I have said, are not only dangerous, but confirmed misogynists. In nearly all the instances I have read of bucks attacking human beings, their victims have been of the opposite sex. A woman was badly frightened at Bridge of Cally a year or two ago, and knocked about by a buck; and one was killed in Germany. The late Tom Speedy gave an account in the *Field* of a friend of his, Macara by name, who was charged and gored in the thigh by a buck which had not seen him in its path during a drive. One horn went into him to a depth of two inches, and his head and ear were badly torn. His coat was ripped up by one of the hind feet, and not until a keeper rushing to the spot cut its throat with a knife did its struggles cease. The main artery in Macara's leg was almost cut through, and he was in bed for some weeks and was incapacitated for a considerable period.

In this same article was a pleasantly written account of a tame roe at Tulliemet. She would follow her master like a dog and evinced great attachment to him. Bread and jelly she loved, and "was passionately fond of gingerbread"! On the appearance of a strange dog, though perfectly at home with all those about the place, she would bolt up to her master's bedroom for safety. When fifteen months old she contracted an alliance with a wandering buck and, exactly two years from the time she was found, gave birth to a kid. This she concealed in a neighbouring wood and remained for a few days about her old home, returning to her young one to give it food. When it was able to follow her she remained with it, though while she visited her human friends she often brought it to the edge of the wood near the kennel.

"During the next three years she brought forth twins and always acted as described. One day she made it appear manifest to Mr. Young that she wanted him to visit her kids. She walked on before him, nodding her head and frequently looking round to see if he was following her. She led him



STUDIES OF ROE BUCKS



EVENING—THE FRINGE OF THE MOOR

direct to the young, and lifting one of them he carried it home, the mother following like a dog." Mr. Young was even photographed with the mother and her little one, and most attractive they look. This doe was often seen galloping "round and round the ring followed by her kids, and in a moment would wheel and go in the opposite direction, the young ones kicking up their heels in a most ludicrous fashion. It was while going their fastest that the sudden wheeling took place, and I could not help thinking that there was a motive in their sport, the result of a hunted animal."

This doe, after a life longer than is usually enjoyed by a pet of this kind, was observed one morning eating some early grass on which there was frosty rime. The following day she was dead from braxy.

Roe are determined fighters when they do come to blows, and use both their horns and forelegs in striking their opponents. Even the fragile-looking doe is no mean adversary. A keeper I once met told me that on one occasion he had found a kid asleep in some bracken. When he picked it up it cried loudly, and almost immediately he received a severe blow in the back which slit his coat open and nearly knocked him down. Turning, he saw a doe and a second kid. The mother had struck him a downward slashing blow with foreleg and continued to run round at a distance, displaying every symptom of alarm until her young one was released.

They have not many natural enemies in this country. Foxes will attack sickly does and kids, though not full-grown, healthy animals, unless pressed by hunger. An account appeared some years ago of a German buck which, on the skull being cleaned, was found to have the broken canine tooth of a fox embedded in it. This buck was probably attacked when its horns were still in velvet. Curiously enough, considering the rarity of such an occurrence, two similar cases had been noted in the same locality. Both foxes and roe in this part of Germany seem to have been singularly unlucky!

A keen stalker wrote to me last year: "I also saw a fox one day running a line like a foxhound, right up to a roe deer lying near me. When she started off at full speed he put his nose down like an old hound and ran again as if he had not seen her."

Eagles are about the only other natural enemies that roe have to contend with in Scotland. In 1903 two shepherds found a roebuck actually dying from the attack of an eagle which made off as they approached. The poor little beast was badly torn, having been unable to reach a wood, which is the natural refuge of the roe against the onslaught of the great birds.

In the *Scotsman* a few years ago a writer described seeing an eagle swoop down on a herd of stags which rushed off in great alarm. The interesting part of the account lay in the fact that the eagle was then seen to attack a solitary roebuck which showed more courage than the red deer; "for, in a moment, he was up on his hind legs striking out at the eagle with his front ones."

Joseph Wolf, that greatest of all animal painters, in one of his most brilliant pieces of work, depicted a doe and her kid attacked by an eagle. This large panel hangs in the dining-room at Guisachan.

Flies, botflies, lung diseases, and tapeworm are afflictions which the roe have to endure, and, owing to their small size, which renders them easily portable, and their local habits, they suffer a good deal from poachers. I was after a good buck for a week once and never saw him. If you are stalking new ground of any size, it will take that period for you to get really to know it. In this case apparently someone else did, for shortly after I left I saw the head of a good buck from this locality and attached to it, by a label, a name which certainly ought not to have been there!

Accidents to roe are not nearly as numerous as are those to red deer. They occasionally get their hind legs caught up in wire fences and are unable to extricate themselves. I once caught a doe in my arms which had got stuck in a wire fence during a drive. She squealed vigorously, but dashed off none the worse when I released her.

Roe will make astonishing jumps, and I do not think a 7-foot fence is beyond their powers.

A curious case was reported by Walter Winans. A buck put his foot through a knot hole in a splinter of pine wood left by some woodcutter. Constant friction had worn through the skin, flesh, and ligaments so that the edges of the wood were against the bone.

At Glendoe a buck was started by a terrier and made for Loch Ness. As it entered the water it was seen to have a fox trap fixed on its hind leg. This buck swam the width of the loch, about a mile and a half at this point, and was killed a week later by the keeper at Portclair. Another roe, caught in a similar manner, left its foot in the trap and escaped.

I have never myself actually seen roe swimming, but they will take to water readily. A buck at Wyvis late in August used to walk down to a loch in full view of the windows of the lodge and plunge in. Having enjoyed a good bath, he leisurely retreated to the shelter of the woods where lay his home.

A full-grown Scottish buck will stand about 26 inches at the shoulder, though it is very difficult to attempt to give any kind of average for weight. Roe weighed at Ledgowan, in Ross-shire, where they do not reach their best development, never weighed more than 35 lb. and were often below this. At Inversanda, in Argyllshire, a buck as he fell weighed 56 lb. At Westerton, where there are very good roe, William McKid, the keeper, who, with James Duncan at Rothiemurchus, knows more about roe than any keeper I have ever met, tells me that the biggest buck he ever saw weighed 60 lb. without the gralloch, which is an astonishing weight. At Drummuir a buck killed in December 1922 weighed as he fell 64 lb. I think, however, that the average buck would normally weigh in Scotland about 45 lb.

The rut takes place between June 25th, though this is very early, and August 12th to 15th, varying of course with the season. At this season the buck barks a good deal, and the sound to the uninitiated closely resembles the noise made by an old collie. Gaston Phoebus writes: "When they be in bucking they sing a right foul song and it seemeth as if they were bitten by hounds"! Colonel Hamilton Leigh tells me he once heard a roe "squealing like a pig, and thrashing a hazel bush in the middle of May," but such behaviour is very unusual.

Last year late in July I got close to a buck behind a stone wall. As I was in a wood he did not see me, though he heard something. He was standing on a flat of grass and rushes, and I had a good view of him. Tucked up, as if he were a sick beast, or like a stag roaring, he made the most extraordinary noise—a kind of subdued "whickering" grunt. Whether it was a love call I am not certain, but incline to think so.

The apparently long period of gestation of the roe had puzzled both scientists and sportsmen for many years. There were two rutting periods to all appearances, as in October the buck again went with the doe. It was left to Dr. Ziegler in 1843 to take the first steps to solve the mystery. He determined that the buck was not in a state to procreate during the October rut. Dr. Birchhoff in 1854 showed clearly that the true rut took place in July or early August. Herr Franz Keibel finally discovered that the embryo does not, as was at first thought, lie dormant, but develops very slowly for several months until the middle of December, four months later. In January it is still very small, after which it appears to develop on normal lines. The kids are born the last week in May or early June. About 33 per cent of the does have two kids at a birth. The kid stays with its mother, and at two years of age is capable of breeding. If a buck, it will mate with its own mother. Such in-breeding would, of course, result in deterioration.

CHAPTER XLV

ROE HEADS

“The males of this kind are horned.”—PLINY.

TO circumvent and kill, unaided, one good buck requires on the part of the stalker a knowledge of the art of venerie, and skill to a far higher degree than to furnish those holocausts of big game of which such nauseating accounts appear at intervals in the Press. A roe-stalker, in addition to endless care and patience, requires experience, good sight, good stalking, good shooting, and *good luck* if he is to get a good head. Some of these details can be acquired; others cannot! Even when one knows there are good bucks on the ground it by no means follows that it will be possible to get a shot.

At Westerton, when I was stalking with Mr. Roger Cross, a keen roe-stalker who has been fortunate in killing several first-class heads, although we knew there were at least four first-class bucks with heads of 10 inches or thereabouts on the ground, we never succeeded in even finding one of them, much less getting a shot. We tried stalking and we tried moving them, but never a big buck did we see. In the latter attempt the big buck would walk quietly out of the wood on the far side from where we were stationed, calmly cross a field in full view of any farm labourers who happened to be working, and as leisurely disappear into some other cover, whence all our best laid plans to dislodge him ended in failure.

There once lived a big buck in Glen Moriston, and on two separate occasions I spent a week endeavouring to locate him without even seeing him. The shooting tenant, who took no interest in roe, was allowed to walk past within a few yards, but I never set eyes on him and never heard that he had been shot. The wood in which he lived is now a thing of the past. It was one of the most beautiful roe haunts that I have ever seen.

Once, late in the evening, when it was almost too dark to see the sight on one's rifle, I found no less than five roe feeding right out in the open in a turnip field. I was so staggered that I thought I must be dreaming! By straining my eyes I could just make out that two were bucks, the better of the two carrying a fair head, and him I managed to kill; but one seldom has luck of this kind and never, so far as I am concerned, with a really good buck.



CAENLOCHAN



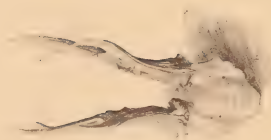
BALMACAN



FEMALE ROE
WITH HORNS



WHATCOMBE
(1)



WHATCOMBE
(2)

ROE HEADS (1)



WHATCOMBE
(3)

For his size a roebuck puts out a wonderful amount of horn-growth; he only stands from 25 to 27 inches at the shoulder, and a good pair of horns will measure 9 inches, a third of his height!

No other species of the cervidæ shows so great a divergence from the normal in individual instances of horn-growth, and although in this country we do not, and I think rightly, pay so much attention as do continental enthusiasts to these freaks, they present many points of interest. I say "rightly," for unfortunately the fictitious monetary value of their horns creates a demand which leads to the artificial production of such heads. When in Russia before the war a quite good ordinary head could be bought for about ten shillings; a not particularly interesting malform was valued at about five times that amount.

The normal full-grown head of a roebuck carries six points. One of Ridinger's drawings represents a 17-pointer killed by the Duke of Wurtemberg in 1730; but though I have seen a Siberian buck with sixteen points I have never seen the European variety with more than twelve. One British head, from Lissadell in Ireland, carries this number of points. A head with twelve points was recorded from Germany, and one with fourteen from Pomerania in 1908. Beyond the fact that it carried fourteen points it was not, apparently, a good head. I have a photograph of a Belgian head with nine points, and there is a good head with a similar number of points in the gunroom at Guisachan. Heads with eight points are not very uncommon. The extra points are often due to the forking of the brows.

The divergence in type between roe horns from different countries is very much less strongly accentuated than is the case with red deer. He would be a confident man who would undertake to differentiate between heads from Scotland, Germany, Austria, and Sweden.

Roe heads with three horns are fairly common, the third horn usually growing from the exterior edge of one of the pedicles. Such heads usually approximate in type to that shown in the sketch of the head from Balmacaan. Beyond the fact that they carry a third horn they present no unusual features. The presence of a coronet on the third horn is variable. Very old bucks, like old stags, are sometimes found to have no coronets, but this is almost without exception a sign of age. Beyond a certain point it is just as impossible to tell the age of a buck by his horns as a stag, though with great age I think their deterioration becomes more apparent.

Of the normal types of horn continental sportsmen differentiate about five types. These are not very prettily named, being described as ordinary, regular (wide-spread), egg-formed, basket-shaped, and tied. "Marching" horns are those in which one horn grows in advance of the other. It is a curious fact, for which I have never found any satisfactory explanation, that with good bucks the horns are usually found to be growing, to some extent,

in this manner. It is rare to find a good head with the horns growing absolutely parallel.

"Chain" coronets are those in which the burr assumes a more or less regular "rosetted" appearance; while "roof" coronets are those in which the coronet gradually slopes downwards without any distinct line of demarcation between the actual main beam and the burr. Sometimes both types are found in one pair of horns.

"Cupped" and "shovelled" malformations are sufficiently explained by the terms themselves.

"Cross-horned" bucks are those in which the brow tine grows very high up on the main beam in such a way that it protrudes opposite the back tine. However, a sketch shows more clearly this type of head which is not common in Scotland. The head figured was killed at Aberuchill.

"Switch-horned" roe are rare. I have seen two: one belonging to Lord Semphill, at Craigievar in Aberdeenshire; the other to H.R.H. the late Duke of Orleans. In Germany such horns, from their ability to inflict damage, are sometimes known as "murderers."

Apart from extra horns, bucks with more than the normal number of points gain their distinction from the splitting up of the main beam into extra points. These, again, are not often found in Scotland.

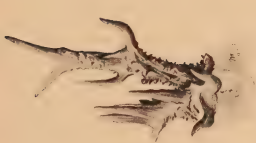
With roe, though never so far as I am aware with red deer, the coronets sometimes grow together and coalesce to form one main beam. I have never actually seen a head of this type grown by a Scottish buck, though they may exist. Shortly before his death I obtained permission from H.R.H. the Duke of Orleans to include drawings of various types of roe horns which I picked out and sketched from his collection a few years ago. Though nearly all continental specimens, any of those different types of horns might be grown by British roe. The little deer are so much more numerous on the Continent, and are held in so much greater estimation than in this country, that examples of the different types of head are more common and noticeable. At times the horns themselves, and not the coronets, coalesce and at others grow together without really joining.

Cases have been known in which the old horn has not been cast in the normal way and the new horn has grown through the old one.

A broken pedicle may, as with red deer, cause the horn to grow at any angle or assume any shape.

So-called "perruque" heads are those in which some injury to the testicles has caused a mass of spongy growth, which usually, though not invariably, retains the velvet.

I have already alluded to the artificial production of freak heads. Happily quite unknown in this country, in Germany such heads are caused by deliberate injury to the genital organs. A charge of dust-shot may produce



A head with many points
(malformed). Length 8"



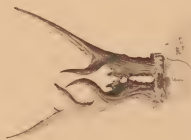
A switch,
Length 8"



A head with pedicles uninjured
but the horns bent. Length 8½"



A head with injury to
left pedicle. Length 8½"



A wide head of normal type.
Length 9½"



Straight type,
Length 10½"



Horns growing together,
right horn malformed.
Length 8½"



A head of normal type,
with eight points.
Length 8½"

ROE HEADS FROM THE COLLECTION OF H.R.H. THE LATE DUKE OF ORLEANS

almost any form of abnormality, and I fear that this is the cause of many of the freak heads which are exhibited for sale.

The best heads in Scotland come from Inverness-shire and Perthshire, and here only from certain localities. Even where there are known to be good roe they may be limited to a very small area, and on one side of a glen the horns may be good and on the other indifferent. At Westerton, for example, the bucks on the Eildon side nearly always carried better heads than those on the south side of the ground. McKid has seen as many as thirty roe killed in a day here, but this was some years ago.

The destruction of woods which started during the war and which has been going on ever since has, with the subsequent replanting, driven the roe from many of their old haunts and signed the death warrant of many of their number. I am not a forestry expert, but I cannot see why it is necessary to cut down a picturesque old wood which does not consist of valuable timber in order to plant a new one. Presumably there is some good reason for it or it would not be done. From the point of view of beauty it is much to be regretted, as the lovely birch woods which clothed the hillsides of many of the most beautiful glens in Scotland are now gone and in their place are bare stretches with small firs dotted about, which, however useful they may be in the future, are not at present beautiful to look at. As I have said, the damage attributed to roe is, in the opinion of many, much exaggerated. I do not believe they are nearly so destructive as rabbits, which are much more difficult to keep out of young plantations. Most of the damage is done in the winter months, and a small square of paper tied beneath the top-bud cluster of the leading shoots of trees 2 to 2½ feet high will protect them from being eaten by roe.

Beaufort, Darnaway, Altyre, and many other places which were famous for roe, now hold nothing like their former stock. Not only have they been driven out, but are remorselessly butchered whenever seen, as though they were vermin. At Darnaway large numbers of roe used to be killed, but, as always in such cases, these slaughters were, it is needless to say, made with shotguns.

There are still plenty of roe at Cawdor, but they are never stalked. At Cawdor there is a good collection of roe heads. The late Sir I. Macpherson Grant was a keen roe-stalker, and there is another good collection at Ballindalloch. I have met a man who used to stalk there with him, who had himself killed five or six shootable bucks in a morning, and fifty or sixty used to be killed in a season by legitimate stalking.

There are some good roe heads at Monymusk, Sir Arthur Grant's place in Aberdeenshire. One rather thin pair of horns must measure about 10 inches; there is one massive head, several malforms, and three or four good normal heads.

There are two good heads in the smoking-room at Balmacaan killed many years ago.

Colonel Frank Cameron, a keen roe-stalker, has several good heads killed at Moniak, where he lived for many years. The best is that of the first roe he ever shot, of which I give measurements; but there are several over 9½ inches, and half a dozen over 9 inches. These were all killed twenty or thirty years ago and are strong, massive heads. There were many good roe in the district round Beaufort in those days, but now they are few and far between.

A first-class roe head should measure at least 9 inches in length. In addition the points must be long, the horn thick and rugose, while beauty of form, as in the case of red deer, adds enormously to the value of a trophy. It is very difficult to arrive at a satisfactory standard for ascertaining the girth or beam of a roe horn. A smooth horn is easily measured, but one with rough "pearlings" very difficult. The continental method of taking the tape round both coronets has many points to recommend it.

I have killed quite a number of roe with horns over 9 inches long, but never a one that could fairly be considered first-class. They all fail in length of points, particularly the brows, and I think that this weakness excludes more heads from being first-class than any other shortcoming.

There must be some good roe heads tucked away in obscure corners of Scotland, but the trouble is that very few people know a first-class head when they see it.

I have included in this chapter particulars of the best heads I have come across, the majority of which have not been recorded before.

Mr. Millais has about the best collection of first-class roe heads that I know, though they have not all been shot by himself. Many of them were exhibited at the loan collection of British heads in 1913.

With the possible exception of a head which he now owns, shot by J. Corballis in the Saw Mill wood at Beaufort in 1879, which perhaps equals it in thickness but not length, the most massive Scottish head which I have seen is one killed by Major Home Graham Stirling on Turleum Hill, Strowan, on October 4th, 1889. Not only is it extraordinarily strong in the horn, as may be seen from the sketch, but very long and rough. In fact, it is above the category of even first-class heads. I am much indebted to him for allowing me to make the drawing.

By far the best head which I have seen killed in recent years in Scotland is that poached at Novar during the war. Combining great length and thickness with long points, the horns are rough, very heavily "pearled," and the span is wide. The posterior points are remarkable. It is a head to dream about, but one, alas! which is seldom seen.

A good head was killed near Aviemore in 1925 with a length of 10¼ inches,

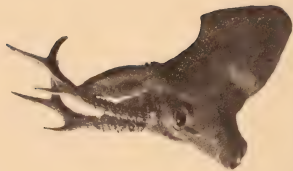
TURLEUM HILL



ARNDILLY, 1907.



ARNDILLY, 1904



AMERCHILL



but the left horn is better than the right and both are rather smooth. It is now in the possession of Mr. Patrick Grant.

In 1922 a good buck was killed at Montcoffer in Aberdeenshire with a length of 11 inches and very good brow points, but the top points were weak.

A very thick massive head was obtained at Holmrose in 1924 with a length of $9\frac{5}{8}$ inches and a tip-to-tip measurement of just under 6 inches. In the same year a very thick-horned buck was shot at Dumaglass. The horn was $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, though one horn was better than the other. At Novar, also in 1924, a buck was killed with only four points, but a length of 10 inches; while at Westerton, Mr. Roger Cross killed a good roe of over 9 inches, with a tip-to-tip measurement of over $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches. He has, however, got several better heads from the same locality, the best of which is shown.

There are two very fine heads at Arndilly, one being $11\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length and the other $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches. They are both first-class in every way, and the photographs scarcely do them justice.

Mr. Arthur Hawley killed a buck with horns of great length at Aberchelder in 1913, though it lacks the strength and rugged character which are so characteristic of the best heads. It is otherwise a very graceful wild head. This buck was an old one. I was stalking on the same ground shortly after he was killed. There were rumours of another good buck being about, but I never had the luck to see anything but one or two very moderate heads.

A fine head was shot by a keeper at Beaufort in 1918 during a winter shoot which recalls two other Scottish heads: one killed by the late Captain Alan Cameron of Lochiel at Aldourie in, I think, 1910; the other by Colonel Hamilton Leigh at Levishie in 1909. All three heads are in the first class. Their measurements leave nothing to be desired: the points are good, the horn is rough—and there we come to a full stop. No particular weakness is present, but all these heads are lacking in the graceful and symmetrical lines which add so enormously to the beauty of a trophy, and may be grouped under the general heading of "style."

They are heads which one would only be too delighted to shoot; but I have killed roe with inferior measurements which I would not exchange.

The curious malform from Caenlochan was grown by an old buck. Such variations from the normal are not very common in this country, though they are highly prized on the Continent, where heads of this type are known as "kummerer," a term which is not applied to abnormalities of reasonable size, but to those degenerates which have never grown anything but distorted spikes or these curly, ram-like horns such as I have figured.

The heads of the Whatcombe roe, of which I have included sketches, all show remarkable features. The best (No. 1) combines all the qualities which go to make a first-class trophy. The horn is massive, rugged, and strong, whilst the length is unusual and the shape good, though the horns are not

exactly parallel. To avoid criticism it may be said that the brows should have been longer, but it is a remarkable head.

One of the best Dorset heads I have seen, though not remarkable for length— $8\frac{3}{4}$ inches—is as fine in its way as any British roe head I have come across of similar measurements. Very wild, rough, with good points and large pearlins, it only lacks length to render it first-class.

The second head from Whatcombe of which I give a sketch (No. 2)—killed August 3rd, 1920—is very typical of an old buck going back. The points are smooth and blunt; the outer surface of the horn has none of the roughness which adds so much to the beauty of a roe's horn, being worn with age, and the skull is smooth with rugose excrescences. As showing the superior size of the Dorset roe compared to the Scottish, this buck when killed scaled 56 lb. (gralloched), whereas for a Scottish buck in his prime this would be a very unusual weight.

The third illustration (No. 3) shows another old buck with the long, thin brows—the right is $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches and the left $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches—which are a feature of certain Dorset heads. I have seen no head from England which combines this great length of brow points with all the other qualities which go to make a first-class roe head, but in themselves these brows are remarkable. The only Scottish roe with brows of nearly this length which I can recall is one killed in Aberdeenshire by Mr. Eric Harvey in 1909, in which head the right brow measured 5 inches.

Another buck, possibly a son of the Whatcombe roe whose horns are figured, had very good brows, the left measuring 5 inches.

Female roe with antlers or rudimentary horns have been recorded from time to time, though they are not common. For permission to use the sketch of the horned doe I am indebted to Colonel J. Hamilton Leigh. It gives a good idea of this type of abnormality. Alston in his paper on female deer with antlers (*Proc. Zool. Soc.*, 1879) mentions a case in which both antlers were in velvet, one being a simple curved snag about 6 inches long, while the other consisted of a short stump. This doe was in good condition and was accompanied by a fawn of the previous year, while she showed signs that she had been recently suckling. A doe shot by Lord Egremont near Petworth in 1810 and presented by him to the Royal College of Surgeons, was described by him as a very old and uncommonly large doe with two young in her. The left horn was, again, a simple curved snag about 3 inches long with a well-developed burr; while the right was represented by a small mushroom-shaped burr without any beam. The velvet had been cleaned. In many of these cases the velvet has never been stripped. Usually, too, does of this type are barren; but some are known to have been fertile.

Mr. Millais gives a drawing of a five-point roe head of this type in *British Deer*, and Scherren instanced a case in the *Field*, October 23rd, 1909, with

an illustration of an apparently normal six-point head grown by a doe. This animal was shot in 1906 by Herr Riedel at Mauereck in Silesia, near the Austrian frontier. Examined by a veterinary surgeon, she was found to have the ovaries atrophied, the udder diminutive, and had never had a fawn. The age was between four and five years. There was no line of demarcation between the coronet and the pedicle, but this fact, as was pointed out at the time by Mr. Allan Gordon Cameron, is no indication that the antlers had never been shed, as normally no break is apparent until the antlers are nearly due to fall off. Nor is the smoothness of horns any indication, or very little, that the antlers have been carried for any particular length of time.

The development of male secondary characters is not entirely accounted for by atrophy of the ovaries in a female. There is no reason, in other words, why, in the case of deer, horns should be grown by the female solely because the ovaries are undeveloped. The development of male characters in the male is dependent on an internal secretion produced by the testes. Probably, then, in these abnormal females the male internal secretion is produced.

Two cases similar to the above were given in the *Field* by Herr Zeitler, February 29th, 1896; and in the *Zoologist* (1886) two instances from Kippenheim in the Black Forest were recorded. In the same publication (1889) an instance from Aberdeenshire was mentioned, and another from Ayrshire. In the *Field*, January 5th, 1917, a female roe from Scotland was figured with rudimentary malformed horn-growth in the velvet. The mammary glands were still yielding a small quantity of milk and the animal was fat and in good condition.

According to "Snaffle," hermaphrodite roe have small horns, often permanent and never clean of velvet, such beasts having one ovary and one testicle. Pseudo-hermaphrodite, with the outward appearance of a doe, have two perfect testicles, clean horns, and may clean and cast their horns regularly.

A table giving the relative weight of the antlers of roe deer will be found at the end of Chapter VIII. It is based on facts collected by Dombrowski and analysed by Professor Julian Huxley.

The following measurements are of some of the best recently killed heads which have come under my notice and have not previously been recorded:—

Locality.	Points.	Length.	Girth.	Tip to Tip.	Date.	Remarks.	Owner.
Arndilly	3+3	11½	3½	5½	1904		Mr. W. Stewart-Menzies.
Arndilly	3+3	11½	3½	9	1907		Mr. W. Stewart-Menzies.
Montcoffer	3+3	11	2⅞	4	1922	Coronet 6 in.	Dr. E. J. Spriggs.
Novar	3+3	10¾	4½	7	1918	Coronet 6¾ in.; posterior tine 3 in., R. brow 4½ in., L. brow 4 in. (Killed by a poacher.)	Colonel J. Hamilton Leigh.

ROE DEER

Locality.	Points.	Length	Girth.	Tip to Tip.	Date.	Remarks.	Owner.
Aberchalder	3+3	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	1913		Mr. A. Hawley.
Moniack	3+3	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	4	4	1893	Brows 4 in.	Colonel Frank Cameron.
Beaufort	3+3	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	6 $\frac{3}{4}$	1918	Shot by a keeper	
Aviemore	3+3	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	4	1925		Mr. P. Grant.
Turleum Hill	3+3	10	4	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	1889	A head of great thickness and very rough	Major Hume Graham Stirling.
Westerton	3+3	10	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	1922	Coronet 6 in. Brow 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Posterior tine 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.	Mr. Roger Cross.
Westerton	3+3	9 $\frac{3}{4}$	3 $\frac{3}{8}$	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	1924		Mr. Roger Cross.
Holmrose	3+3	9 $\frac{5}{8}$	—	5 $\frac{7}{8}$	1924		Major Hugh Rose.
Invergordon	3+3	9 $\frac{1}{2}$	5	5 $\frac{5}{8}$	1896		Mr. George Inglis.
Bearnock	3+3	9 $\frac{5}{8}$	3 $\frac{1}{8}$	7 $\frac{1}{8}$	1920		Mr. H. F. Wallace.
Beaufort	3+3	9 $\frac{1}{4}$	3 $\frac{3}{4}$	4	1879	Shot by J. Corballis	Mr. J. G. Millais.
Ardross	5+5	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{1}{8}$	1882		Mr. C. W. Dyson Perrins.

ENGLISH HEADS

Whatcombe	3+3	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	—	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	56 lb. gralloched	Colonel J. Hamilton Leigh.
Whatcombe	3+3	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	—	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	56 lb. „ A very old buck	Colonel J. Hamilton Leigh.
Whatcombe	3+2	9 $\frac{1}{8}$	—	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	R. brow, 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. L. brow, 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. An old buck	Colonel J. Hamilton Leigh.



NOVAR



BEAUFORT



WESTERTON



MONTCOFFER

CHAPTER XLVI

ROE-STALKING

"He shot the roebuck on the lea."—*Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.

IT is a thousand pities that more people do not cultivate the art of roe-stalking with a rifle, for it is an art. It can be enjoyed at times when no other kind of shooting is available, for the buck carries his horns from the end of May or early June to the end of November or thereabouts. Nor need it interfere with other shooting, for the best time, by far, to stalk is in the very early morning.

Those early morning stalks after roe stand out for me above all other joys. The grey shadows, gradually becoming luminous at the approaching dawn, the awakening life, the dew-drenched verdure underfoot, combine, with the uplifting of one's whole being to all that is fresh and clean, to render one for a few brief, precious moments the man one might have been. Do others, I wonder, under such conditions share the dreams which come to me? Do they too pass into the Enchanted Wood whose sunlit glades are bright with never-fading flowers, where time stands still and ageless youth for ever dwells? "O! mihi præteritos referat si Jupiter annos!" How many times has the old Roman's passionate prayer echoed down the passing years!

Although, taking it all round, the early morning is the best for stalking roe, in the heat of the summer they will often rise and move about in the early afternoon. Towards late evening they again rise and feed, but are usually found along the edges of woods and not in the open. I have killed more roe at about 7 a.m. than at any other time. Then, they are moving back to the thickets where they spend most of the day, and after their morning feed are not, perhaps, so keenly on the alert. The best time to stalk roe is after a storm, if the weather is sunny. Though a high wind is an advantage in wood-stalking, as it deadens any noise, roe do not move about under these conditions, but prefer to lie up in some sheltered thicket, so that there is not the same chance of seeing them; and to see them first is the greatest element of success in roe-stalking. Though amusing, and the daintiest animals of all to watch, candour compels me to admit that, at times, their movements, when they fancy themselves unobserved, are furtive and almost

"gawky" as they skulk about the edges of the woods. There is no sign of inelegance when they are alarmed, and all their movements are free and unrestrained.

I watched one young buck for many hours on end. He was in the habit of jumping a low fence which separated the garden from a young plantation. In this he would lie until satisfied that the coast was clear, when he would leap on to a wall covered with ivy which skirted the front of the terrace. Along this he would eat his way, occasionally jumping down on to the lawn and varying his meal with a little grass. Then he would lie up close to the wall, turning round and round, just like a dog, before tucking his legs up under him. He was very tame and used to come every morning and afternoon and obligingly feed in front of the windows whilst I made a number of sketches of him. He was always on the alert, raising his head every few seconds and instantly stopping feeding with ears cocked when anything unusual attracted his attention.

It is constantly asserted that the roe has no tail. This is incorrect, as the roe has a tail, though it is very rudimentary. The tail of this young buck was quite discernible. When alarmed the hairs on the rump, at any rate the upper ones, are erected.

Although in Scotland roe are usually found among woods and in the low country, they will at times wander right up into the high ground in deer forests. One of the Wyvis stalkers told me he had seen them in Corrie Mhor, the wildest and grandest part of the forest; and Mr. Millais has seen them on the high ground at Fealar.

They are very fond of the grassy stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) and an allied species which grow beside springs, though I have never seen these particular plants, by running hill water. Their desire for this food takes roe to the hill, and if the plant is seen, its locality will be a pretty safe spot to look for a buck.

They are great wanderers in one way, and yet very local in their habitat. In one small portion of a Scottish glen with which I am intimately acquainted I have, during the past twenty years, killed three bucks which, if not first-class, may be considered to have claims to justify their inclusion high up among good second-class heads. Three miles away on another property, although there are roe on the ground, part of which is ideally situated for them, I have never seen or heard of a really good buck being killed.

At the beginning of July is a good time to stalk, or even a little earlier, before the bracken has reached a height which completely hides a buck. They are very fond of this weed and are frequently found in its vicinity. When it dies they betake themselves to plantations if there are any handy. Late October is not a bad time, though the days are much shorter and it is certainly more of an effort to rise at daybreak.



THE PATH DOWN TO THE RIVER

One great drawback to summer stalking in Scotland are the flies. This may not sound a great hindrance on paper, but they will nearly drive one crazy, and the roe, also, suffer terribly. They may be seen dashing wildly about shaking their heads and ears in an endeavour to rid themselves of these little pests. I have never found any of the much-advertised remedies of any avail, except as very temporary respites. Smoking certainly mitigates the nuisance, but it means never having a pipe out of one's mouth!

Very careful spying is necessary when after roe. They are so small that they can hide behind a tuft of heather, and unless you know that a roe is there he will be certain to spot you first. The stalker, unless he has a wide field of vision which he has carefully spied, should proceed very slowly, scanning every depression and possible hiding-place with the greatest care. Roe have an astonishing trick of materialising from nowhere, and an apparently empty grass field may contain more than one buck. When not alarmed they are extraordinarily inconspicuous, and I was interested to notice quite recently how instantaneously noticeable they became when they assumed an attitude of alertness.

A monocle Zeiss glass is most useful, especially in wood-stalking. It can be carried in the breast pocket or slung round the neck by a strap.

If, advancing down a ride cut in a wood, one side of which is separated by a narrow strip of woodland from an open field, or a road on which there is traffic, or flanked by a high wall or other obstacle, you chance to "jump" a roe, wait. If he is on the side nearest the field or wall, he will almost certainly cross the ride in preference to facing the obstacle or open ground. Should, however, you follow this advice it is almost equally certain that the roe will do nothing of the sort, for I have never met any animal with such an uncanny knack of frustrating the best laid plans of his pursuers!

"It is a diverse beast, for it doth nothing after the nature of any other beast," wrote Gaston de Foix, and he evidently knew what he was writing about!

If you unexpectedly "jump" a doe, it is always worth while sitting down and spying carefully on the chance of a buck. The latter will often remain quietly watching if he sees the doe alarmed, before sneaking off in the opposite direction.

Roe have their share of curiosity, but it is not safe to rely on this trait. McKid has seen a suspicious buck actually stand on its hind legs in an attempt to make certain of some hidden danger; and on another occasion saw a buck which suspected danger in front turn and jump clean over a beater who stood in his path.

If, when a buck is alarmed or suspicious, he lowers his head to within 6 inches or so of the ground, that is the time to shoot, as he will almost certainly make a sudden bolt.

When hit a roe will sharply depress his ears; if he is seen to do that it is always worth while to spend some time looking for him if he cannot at once be found.

Very few keepers know anything about roe. They will often, in answer to an enquiry, tell you "that there are plenty does about, but I have na' seen a buck"; which may usually be taken to mean that they have not looked for them! The best bucks are extremely hard to find even when they are known to be on the ground, and no animal is better qualified to look after himself if once he has been fired at and missed. If you are so fortunate as to kill a buck, do not for that reason think that your chances in the immediate vicinity are over. It is remarkable how little disturbed at the report of a rifle other deer may be. I killed a buck at Rothiemurchus last year. We galloped it and had not gone 200 yards when another and much better buck suddenly jumped up out of some long heather covering a ridge, rising from the other side of a grassy flat, and galloped off. Fortunately I succeeded in stopping him. I have known similar instances on other occasions.

At times, as is the case with every animal, absurdly easy chances occur. Do not despise them on that account. In a deer forest a blank day, under normal conditions, is the exception; when roe-stalking—at any rate, if you are particular as to the class of head you shoot—it is the rule. A collection of good roe heads represents more hard work, more disappointments, and more skill than a similar collection, almost without exception, of any other species. So take the chances which the gods give you. Anyone can go out and kill stags, but it takes an expert to stalk roe successfully.

Where roe are numerous it sometimes happens that one finds rings which they have made by running round and round in circles. Very often the centre of the circle is a tree. It is a beautiful sight to see roe playing in these rings in the summer, and I have watched them for hours. Often they dash off in a manner which makes the spectator believe that his presence has been detected. Then they come bounding back between the birch stems to resume their play in the open.

It seems almost superfluous to state that a roe is a bright burnt sienna red in summer, and a dark mouse-like grey in the winter, though there is a considerable amount of brown about the face and legs even at this time. The winter coat has not reached its full length before November, but I have seen roe looking quite grey by the middle of September. I have often seen, too, on the same day and in the same locality one roe quite grey and another still in a bright red coat.

Tracking is not an art which flourishes to any great extent in this country, and even to an expert it is no easy matter to distinguish with any certainty the tracks of roe.



"TAK' THE LAST!"



RUFFLED!

A good buck has forefeet rather larger than the hind ones, and the feet are more turned in than those of a doe. On the other hand, the track of an old doe is very much like that of a buck. The tracks of a buck are more regularly spaced and further from one another laterally than are those of the doe. If a buck is travelling fast he will leave the marks of his dew claws behind that of the heel, and the claws are wider apart.

Calling roe is a method of sport much practised on the Continent, but not very often in Scotland. It can only be attempted successfully when the rut is in progress, and those who have tried it describe it as most exciting. Artificial roe calls are made by means of which the call of the amorous doe can be imitated, though experts can produce this sound with the aid of a leaf without the manufactured instrument.

A hot day with a little breeze is usually the best on which to use the call, and the best ground that on which there are few does and some good bucks. The buck usually leaves the doe about 7 a.m. and lies up by himself. If he hears the call towards 10 a.m. he thinks it is the doe calling him and responds. The caller gives three calls—a rather highly pitched “piep, piep,” the second rather sharper than the first—waits for a few minutes, and then gives two more. He then remains quiet for five minutes or so, when he gives two or three more calls. If this is not successful in attracting a buck, he moves quietly to another place. It is best to keep a position from which the sound of the call will be carried towards the spot in which a buck is likely to be—a gully for choice—but from which he will not get the wind. Young bucks will come full tilt right out into the open, to within 30 yards, or even close up to the caller; but old bucks always approach the call from the rear, so that a good field of fire is desirable. In fact, one of the most important points in this form of sport is the choice of position. An old buck will stalk the call in order to get the wind so that he may see if another and bigger buck is already in possession. They will also walk quietly along pretending to feed with their heads down, as though unconscious of the call, always edging a little nearer until they make certain of danger or the fact that a rival is already in charge of the doe. If they get the caller's wind they slip into cover and bark, making a tremendous commotion. Either sex will bark when suspicious of danger or when suddenly alarmed.

A buck will leave a doe and come to the call. A friend tells me that he has seen lying with a doe a buck, which on hearing the call got up and left her, the doe meanwhile remaining where she was without taking any notice. This tends to show that they are not monogamous, as is sometimes supposed.

When the call is used the shot is often a snap, as an old buck is quick to detect the fraud and dashes off immediately. If he has been taken in, fired at, and missed, it will be a long time before he can be cheated a second time.

CHAPTER XLVII

FURTHER NOTES ON STALKING

"The Rowe make marvellous good chase . . . and fie far, and their fleshe is good meate."—GEORGE TURBERVILLE.

"**T**HE Rowe is a beast well known and easie to hunt, and yet fewe huntsmen know his nature——" Thus Turberville. Gaston de Foix much earlier had described the roe as "a good little beast and goodly for to hunt." He continues: "And if the roebuck were as fair a beast as the hart, I hold that it were a fairer hunting than that of the hart, for it lasteth all the year and is good hunting and requires great mastery, for they run right long and gynnously."

I have several times been so fortunate as to be asked to stalk roe at places where really good bucks had been frequently seen. They would obligingly promenade in the afternoons and evenings within full view of the house and allow a close inspection by the domestic staff or anyone else who took not the slightest interest in roe beyond the fact that "they were such pretty little things"! My arrival was invariably the signal for their complete and entire disappearance, which is one of the reasons why I have never killed a first-class roe!

It is strange how seldom one attains one's ideal, and in stalking there is no exception to the general rule. Only too often the really good heads go to people who do not appreciate them. One of the best stag's heads of post-war years was killed by a man who did not in the least realise its value. It was an uneven head, and he calmly suggested that it would improve its appearance if he sawed off the uneven bay point on one horn!

One of the most delightful spots for stalking roe which I have ever visited is Aberuchill Castle in Perthshire. Here in 1925 I had four days' stalking and secured four bucks. These were killed within 200 yards of the same spot, and the last almost in a camp of Girl Guides, whose slumbers I fear my shot must have aroused! Each morning I saw roe as I looked out of my window, and once, through a thick ground mist, the form of a good buck as he walked slowly past the house. I did not immediately follow him, as I hoped the mist would clear. He was in the open park with no cover, and I knew would spot me long before I could distinguish him. The mist did not clear, and I never saw him again!

On another morning I had killed one buck and gone back to bed—a thing I should have scorned to do in my youth! However, as one gets older one's views alter. I had hardly closed my eyes when an enthusiastic footman roused me with the news that the keeper had just seen a buck a few hundred yards off! Up I got and dashed out. We found him—he was the buck which gave the peculiar cry I have attempted to describe in another chapter—but he was a young beast with a nice head but improving, so we left him in peace.

Much of the roe ground at Aberuchill is situated quite close to the castle. To be right on one's ground is very much pleasanter than to have to walk several miles in the dark to reach it at daybreak. It was stalking *de luxe* and I enjoyed every moment of it. Nor can I ever adequately express my thanks to the kind friends whose generosity gave me so great a happiness.

It seemed to me that the Perthshire roe were larger than the Inverness-shire ones, but that the ears were smaller. It may have been imagination on my part, and I meant to take some measurements, but have had no recent opportunities of doing so.

Another beautiful place where I have been fortunate enough to stalk is Rothiemurchus. Here may be found every variety of ground to delight the heart of a roe-stalker, from the craggy fastnesses of Ord Ban and Kinapol to the cool recesses of Black Park, the glades of Tullochgrue or the fir-sprinkled flats of Whitewell, with its magnificent background of the Cairngorms and the gloomy grandeur of the Larig Ghru. Never in my own mind could I decide which I loved the best. The view from the top of the Ord is in some ways unsurpassed. From it the whole of the Spey valley can be seen stretching away beyond Loch Insh to the Drumochter; the Doune nestling below, with Loch an Eilean behind. Lovely as it is, perhaps Whitewell won me more. Here are grassy flats lush with rich grasses and sweet-scented bog-myrtle. Heathery, fir-clad knolls dominate them, with, in the distance, the blue depth of the pass. Such a spot, with the early sun casting long shadows on the glades, is a foretaste of what heaven may be. And in this scene of ethereal loveliness live the roe. You may, if your eyes be sharp, see a buck before he has detected your unwelcome presence, or, a shadow himself, he melts into the shadows, and only his angry bark as he dives deeper into the wood reminds you that he is a corporeal presence and not a fairy-like figment of your imagination. For when he suspects that there is danger the roe will not, like a stag, stop to investigate but is off at once, losing no time in putting as great a distance as possible between himself and the suspected peril. Very, very rarely does he stop when once started. Nor is he the only inmate of these happy hunting grounds. I have in a morning's walk here seen capercaillie, black-game, grouse, duck, snipe, curlew, oyster-catchers, coot, moor-hens, plover, eagle, kestrel, to say nothing of the lesser folk—bullfinches, larks, yellow-hammers, and chaffinches.

They say a man will never become a good rider until he has had some falls, a good fisherman until he has lost some salmon, or a good stalker until he has missed some beasts. It may prove a consolatory maxim when looked at in the light of after events, yet I found it but a poor salve to my feelings one September many years ago when staying in Ross-shire. There was a lot of good-looking roe ground on the estate, which is synonymous with saying that the place was one of the most beautiful in Scotland. The lower hill-slopes were covered with a sprinkling of birches, there was some nice long heather, a few scattered hill-tarns lying among the rocks, and some fine grassy flats down by the old stone dyke at the edge of the wood.

As I had leave to go out after the roe whenever I liked I thought I was in for a real good time, more especially as tales were rife of a big buck which had been seen about for the last two years and which no one had yet succeeded in killing. I was off at half-past four on the Monday morning after my arrival, and, not knowing the ground, came suddenly on a roe feeding by the side of a small loch. He saw me first and bounded off. Almost immediately a buck leaped on to a knoll opposite me and stood staring. The sun had just risen, and though the top of the knoll on which he stood was bathed in rosy light, the hollows around were still filled by the purple shadows of the night. For a second he stood, his red coat glowing and blazing in the sun, the unruffled surface of the tarn reflecting him, and the hills of Strathconan rising at his back. Then he vanished like a fairy of the woods and I was left lamenting. That he was indeed the big buck I am pretty certain, though I never saw him again. I tried many times, but having aroused my ardour, he was content for the future to remain hidden. Still, for that second which he remained on the knoll I am in his debt. He gave me a picture of which I often think, and I am proportionately grateful. Well, I saw three more bucks that morning, but did not succeed in getting close enough to any of them for a shot. There were several family parties scattered about, which made it difficult to approach any one of them without disturbing the others.

On Tuesday I went out again at 4.30, getting one chance at a buck, which I missed. He was with a doe, feeding on a burnt patch of heather, and it was extraordinary how their red coats blended with the dark background. Unless I had seen them myself I should not have believed they could be so inconspicuous. I crawled up a burn, hoping for a close shot, but they got a touch of the wind and made off at once, the buck giving me a poor chance as he galloped away.

On Wednesday I repeated the performance. Having seen a buck feeding, stern on among some trees, I stalked him and got within 80 yards. Some heather roots caught my foot, made a slight noise, and up went his head. Fearing he would move, I fired hastily through some waving grass, and missed! This was the only fair chance I got. The next cartridge in my



THE FIRST SNOW

magazine jammed, necessitating various intricate manœuvres with a hunting knife and an extractor. Having settled this little matter I proceeded, and almost directly saw a doe and her fawn watching me about 100 yards off. They bounded over the skyline immediately ; but I mention the circumstance, as it is curious that two shy animals like roe should have remained feeding quite quietly after a shot had been fired within 120 yards of them. It only shows what a pull the modern small-bore rifle has over the old-fashioned express. The latter would most likely have cleared the whole of that part of the ground for some hours. Apropos of this, I have seen a roe feeding within 20 yards of the Highland line, merely raising its head as the train went by, and this not 600 yards from a station ; yet all animals show unaccountable boldness at times quite at variance with their usually timid habits. I saw no more roe that morning, but settled with George, the head-keeper's son, to call me at daybreak on the morrow if he did not find me waiting at the lodge gates. As I had been sleeping in a small separate building he could do this quite well without disturbing anyone else. So we thought ; but some of my fellow-guests leaving that afternoon, my things were moved into the lodge itself, an arrangement, however, of which I knew nothing until returning from grouse-shooting late that evening. Unfortunately for George he knew nothing of this either. I woke at three the next morning and, as it would not be light for another hour, turned over for "five minutes more," thinking the alarum clock would wake me at the proper time. The beastly thing never went off, and though an owl hooted intermittently outside my window, I paid no attention to it until roused by a half-dressed footman, who informed me it was six o'clock. It was too late to hope for any luck, more especially as a thin rain was falling, accompanied by a nasty raw mist. Still, I got up, dressed, and made my way to where the disconsolate George awaited me. The wretched youth had tapped vigorously on the window of my untenanted room for some time without getting any response, and had then for the best part of an hour hooted dismally round the house until at last he had awakened the footman.

We saw nothing, but, the day clearing later, I went out by myself in the evening and found a buck feeding in some long bracken. He gave me an easy stalk, and I reached a convenient rock within 70 yards. His shoulder was partly hidden by the waving branches of a small birch, and I forbore to fire, hoping for a better chance. For twenty minutes I waited, thinking I had him safe. The buck never moved 10 yards from the spot where I first saw him, his head held low and his ears back, till finally he fed into some thick bracken. Getting anxious at his non-appearance, after about fifteen minutes I cautiously rose to investigate matters. There was a small gully running up the hillside on my left, into which I thought he must have gone ; but on crawling carefully to the edge, and discovering no sign of him, I

concluded he must have fled down the hill. I accordingly retraced my steps to the spot at which I had lost him, hoping that if still in hiding he would stand for a second before bolting. No such luck. He suddenly jumped up almost at my feet and went off full split, stern on, never giving me a chance. Result—another blank day.

On the Friday I was out again by 4.30. Till seven o'clock we saw nothing, but at that hour events reached a climax by the massacre of an unfortunate doe, which I fired at in mistake for a buck. The next day I departed without having killed a single beast. Now here was a week's roe-stalking in which I had only one really fair chance at a buck, though I had several stalks and saw plenty of deer. I admit I made some misses which might have been obviated, and several mistakes; yet, if roe-stalking were the easy job some people take it for, I think my state of mind would have been a more enviable one on the day of my departure.

CHAPTER XLVIII

A SYLVAN MEMORY

"Oh! the Hielans, the Hielans were aye at my heart."—OLD SONG.

I SAW him first about the middle of May. Across the glen the brown homeliness of the fields was just tinged with green, the same delicate tint as one sees in Africa after the early rains. Beyond the grey stone dyke which marked the edge of the forest the young birches were of a more tangible hue. Every day they assumed a less definite individual form, and became merged by degrees in the great billowy sea which would roll for some four months above the cool recesses of the wood and the moss-grown boulders marking the course of each trickling burn. Down about the river the hazels were still leafless and bare, and over the rushes the peewits circled and called, whilst occasionally one more bold than her companions would fly at some piratical black-headed gull who came too aggressively near her nest. In the pastures lambs frolicked and gambolled. A pair of partridges showed boldly against the sky; lower down the field an old grey hen waddled sedately. In the little copse beside the lodge, the green of the grass broken here and there by the burnt red of last year's bracken was reflected in the foliage of the young trees. About them hung an atmosphere fresh and virginal as that which clings to a young girl on the threshold of life. The wind, clear and musical, sang through the fir tops and stirred the birches to tender whisperings. Clean and free it caressed and enveloped, filling me with an ecstasy of pure delight the while it bore to me across the yellow daffodils and primroses the call of a cuckoo. The world, or such of it as I could see, was bursting with its new-found joy and made no attempt to disguise the fact; the sky was blue, spring was come, and, if one had the ears, the first intoxicating murmur of Pan's pipes came fluting from the shaggy woods.

I sat by a lichen-covered rock and marvelled at the daring which prompted me in the endeavour to transfer the elusive charm of the scene to paper. From a distance excited yappings broke upon my reverie. Nearer they drew and culminated in a crashing in the thicket. A brown-grey form came bounding along in great easy leaps, somewhat fearful and yet with a nice judgment which swept him in mid career to a safe spot at the instant he

caught sight of me. In the rear, all afire with illicit enthusiasm, mouth open, pink tongue flapping, and small pointed ears acock, came the Wee One, pattering on diminutive legs. The chase swept past me and so rapidly that, save for a thudding in the bushes and the subsequent return of the culprit, uncertain of his reception, as was betrayed in the furtive gleam of an immoral eye, I might have been tempted to believe both pursuer and pursued the phantoms of a day-dream.

That was our introduction, and during the next week I got to know him well. The little party consisted of four. The big buck whom "Fhearan" had chased, another buck full grown but smaller, a doe, and a fawn. The two bucks were both in velvet, and the head of the bigger looked enormous. As a matter of fact, his horns measured $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches, though they looked at least another inch. Somewhat marred by short brows, the thickness and roughness of his head made it an unusually good trophy for Glen Urquhart, where roe deer as a rule do not reach their best. On the 17th the smaller buck began to clean; on the evening of the 18th his horns were red, with no sign of velvet. They were all four at the first very tame, and it was interesting to note that no sooner were the horns of the smaller clean than he became much more wary, left his companions, and took to the higher woods by himself.

On the 19th the big buck started to clean, a process which was incomplete when I had reluctantly to leave. On the morning of my departure I walked out into the wood and came across him lying behind a birch. For an hour or more I kept him under observation. Finally, he walked within seven yards of me before realising that the brown lump under the tree was anything more dangerous than a rock or stump. Then he spread out his white rump patch exactly as a prong-horn would do and went off barking and grunting in a great to-do. He had given me so many hours' enjoyment that I could not find it in my heart to shoot him then as I could have at any time, and determined to give him a fighting chance, at any rate, until the autumn. It was with many a qualm, however, that I drove away through the banks of broom and gorse all a blaze of glory, for I knew I might see many another buck ere I met his equal.

Nine weeks later I was back again. Bulletins from Sandy had kept me posted as to his movements. That he had deserted the wood in which I had grown to know him so well and moved on to higher ground; that he had moved back; that he had been seen feeding at midday in a hay-field; that he had moved into the lower wood; that Peter's wife (she of the "stout caat") had met him on the road. For some days previous to my arrival he had vanished altogether and no one knew his whereabouts.

The woods were very different from the time when I had left them. Gone were the daffodils and primroses, the haunting call of the cuckoo, and the

sense of spring. In the forest opposite the heather was purple, and down by the river the hazels stood green amid the luscious grasses. The birches swam in a sea of bracken which would have hidden a hundred roe; the sky was grey, and there was the sound of an abundance of rain.

For some four days I frequented the woods, early and late, from five in the morning till eight at night. I saw, it is true, many roe, but never a warrantable buck, least of all the one I sought. It seemed almost as though he knew his hour of respite was over and the armistice ended. Anyone who has stalked roe, even on ground where they are plentiful, knows what a difficult matter it is to secure a good buck. To obtain a particular animal in wooded country increases the difficulty fourfold and calls for all one's knowledge.

It was not until the beginning of August that I located him.

The woods were soaking. The ground was a swamp, and to move so noiselessly that an animal would be unaware of one's presence until he had himself been detected almost an impossibility. Sheep, too, were unattractively numerous, and though roe deer do not actually dislike the animals themselves—for I have seen them feeding and lying within a few yards—the men and dogs, whose presence they connote, keep them constantly on the alert and in a state of tension. Stalking consequently is at times heart-breaking work.

After a long series of disappointments, one early August evening I determined to sit at the edge of a ride, in the hope that the buck would show himself. It was pouring with rain, but he was none the less likely to appear on that account, so about five o'clock I ensconced myself under a thick bush and prepared to wait. Nothing came to interrupt my thoughts save an occasional wet plump on the back of my hand and a monotonous drip, drip on the leaves overhead. Presently a doe walked quickly across the ride in the habitually furtive attitude of a roe that has not been alarmed. She dived into the bushes within five yards of me, utterly unconscious of my presence, of which, as there was no wind, she remained blissfully oblivious. At 5.45, nothing else appearing, I rose cautiously to my feet intending to move elsewhere. I had not taken a step when I heard an angry bark and saw the indignant buck moving off into the thicket just opposite where I had been sitting. No doubt he had been there for some minutes reconnoitring. Down I sat again under my bush and prepared for eventualities.

Half an hour went by when I thought I saw a slight movement in the bushes across the opening to my left. Very slowly I raised the rifle, and whilst doing so there came a quick movement and a chorus of angry barks as the buck disappeared for the second time. The cunning old beggar had come round quietly from the opposite side to that on which he had first appeared and had been standing motionless until his suspicions had been

confirmed. For another hour I waited patiently, but his mind was made up and he did not return.

Three days later I came down through the wood in the middle of the afternoon. Sheep, as usual, were scattered everywhere and gave little sudden rushes as my approach startled them into consciousness. I rounded an outstanding spur of the bushes, and down the hill, 30 yards ahead, framed in the junipers and overhanging birches, shone an opening, light against the grass beyond. Dark in the centre rose the head of a roe. At the instant his eyes met mine and he rose in a flash. As he dashed away I had a hasty snap, but he escaped unharmed.

It was on the 8th that my little drama drew to its close. That evening I set out late for the wood with Sandy. The wind was from the south-west, so there was need for a detour. We went up to the fringe of the moor, past the grey stones of a ruined cottage where the thistles grew tall and rank, and the bog-myrtle strove with the heather for mastery. The silver stems of the birches gleamed palely in the undergrowth, and the murmur of the burn, swollen by heavy rains, came to me from the glen below. There is to me something peculiarly attractive about such a spot. The moorland lies before one, though the low hills hide it; behind, memories from the years that are gone crowd one's recollection. It is, as it were, the threshold of the Unknown; the doorway of the Unforgotten.

Rabbits scuttled slyly before us, a few short tentative hops the prelude to an undignified and headlong rush into the shelter of the bracken as the danger materialised. Very stealthily and silently we went, peering into bowered corners and umbrageous nooks, deluded now and again by the husk of a dead furze bush or a configuration of the shadows. All without avail. In time we came to the road which severed the two woods. By degrees the upper dwindled into thickets and outposts of the birches, then to single trees and anon to bushes. The bushes crept in among the bracken, and it, again, among bog-myrtle and heather, and so to the open moor. The lower met us with a thick belt of greenery which later broke into peninsulas, isthmuses, and islands of trees. From these, at the spot where we struck the road, a field was carved, flanked on two sides by stone dykes and on the others by a wire fence. We stole among the hazels and alders, crossed a hedge of twisted birch boughs, and found ourselves at the edge of a hayfield, thick at the margin with docks, thistles, and brazen yellow ragwort. The blue of the "Bachelors' buttons" melted into an imperceptible maze. White tails and intangible bodies flickered here and there. Then along the edge of an oat-field, where years before in the flush of a crimson morn I had come, with disastrous results for the freebooters, upon two marauding fallow bucks.

I was in front looking down into the wood which from our position we commanded when, from behind, came a low whistle. Sandy was pointing,

and in a thinning of the oats I saw a roe. She went bounding off and was hidden in a little rocky island topped with bushes which rose above the corn. The oats gave place to turnips, then in a sharp drop to a little flat on whose further side rose a hayfield. The flat wandered peacefully from between the tufts of coarse grass, juniper bushes, a few hazels, and a bed of rushes, into a narrowing clump of birches some hundreds of yards in length. It is an ideal spot for roe, and many a one have I seen there. As we moved something red came into view, and through the low branches I saw a beast. That he was a buck I knew, for as he turned his horns gave a dull gleam, but looking again I saw that they were but an inch or two long, and he dashed away unharmed.

We crossed down into the wood and came at length to the ride in which my adversary had caught me napping. As we traversed its empty aisle something of the mystery which ever hangs about a wood at twilight touched my spirit. Then up along another ride which lay parallel to the field above, and to the road. That the luck was against us, on that night at any rate, was our thought. It was nearly dark, and as I held my rifle against the sky I could not even see the sights, so we started homewards full of consolatory maxims.

"He'll be there for another evening," said Sandy. I knew his mood, and the consolation was the best he had to offer.

Then, just below us, from out of the blurred half-tones of the wood, came a sharp, hoarse bark. Once I might have thought it the angry note of an old collie. Now I knew better. We turned to each other; there was no need of explanation. The sound came again. It was a little nearer.

"He's coming!" I breathed. Sandy gave vent to an indefinite guttural. His excitement forbade speech.

Again the stillness of the wood was broken. This time the note was muffled and seemed to be moving away. I shouldered the rifle.

"It's not much good," said I. "We'll just wait a minute, though."

For some minutes we stood listening on the silent road. I took a few steps and Sandy followed.

"Well——" I began.

Sandy gave a strangled gasp.

"In the ro-a-ad!" he gurgled.

Before me up the hill it stretched, a white, indefinite blur. Straining, I could see the corner of the stone wall which marked the field. Just this side of it, some 80 yards distant, was a dull patch, showing dark. A second before it had not been there, and hope leaped in me. I raised my rifle against the cloudy sky. The foresight was invisible, the back I could dimly see. The dull patch never moved. In desperation I moved the rifle up and down until it seemed level. A thin spurt of flame shot out into the darkness,

followed by a crack and a thud. The grey patch on the road gave a lurch, a bound, and vanished. Sandy dashed into the bushes, I raced up the hill. When I reached the wall I stopped. There was no sign that I could see, and I too plunged into the thicket.

There it was still darker. I could hear Sandy moving, and a low whistle greeted me.

"Have you got him?" I cried.

"No," said Sandy, "but I thoct I hear-rd a fa-all!"

Back I went into the road and walked for a few yards along its edge, peering at the ground. Close to the side was a dark stain. I touched it and drew back my finger wet and sticky. Sandy joined me, and together in the darkness we searched the ground for a quarter of an hour. But it was no use. Not a sign could we discover save that dark stain in the road and a few drops of blood on some fronds of bracken.

"I'll go for the dog," said Sandy at length, and off he started. I suppose that he could not have been absent more than half an hour, but to me the time seemed interminable.

At length I heard footsteps in the road and a joyful mass of hair hurled itself at me. "Tyro," as he had been named, was a young collie, an enthusiastic animal wearing a perpetual grin and overflowing with the exuberance of his own spirits. The patch in the road decided him that there was something more amusing on hand than a walk in the dark, and with a joyful yelp he shot into the wood. We followed. A minute later Sandy gave a shout. "Here he is!" he cried, and there, sure enough, he was. He had given one frantic leap, galloped in a final effort some four or five yards, and dropped dead beneath a tree. But I am inclined to think that I shall never fire a luckier shot than the one which killed him!







